

PRUDHOE TOWN COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of Ordinary Meeting held in The Spetchells Centre at 7:00pm, 24th February 2016**Present**

Cllr Mrs Burt (Chair), Cllr Mrs Cuthbert, Cllr Piper, Cllr Mrs J McGee, Cllr Price, Cllr Simpson, Cllr Reid, Cllr Ms Rose, Cllr Gill, Cllr Futers, Cllr Dobson

1516/146 Apologies for Absence Cllr Mrs N McGee, Cllr G McCreedy, Cllr Graham

1516/147 Declarations of Interest None

1516/148 The Northumberland Estates Mr Colin Barnes (Director of Planning) was in attendance and gave a short presentation about the outstanding development of commercial opportunities in Prudhoe.

Mr Barnes explained that Northumberland Estates (NE) planned to transfer the present planning permission for a supermarket to Low Prudhoe, but on a smaller scale, and bring additional non-food retail to the existing offer on Front Street.

Mr Barnes explained that NE would work with Arch¹ on the development at Low Prudhoe, but it would be NE driving the project forward. Mr Barnes spoke highly of Arch and identified their desire to work in places that struggled to secure investment as well as successful projects in Blyth, Ashington and Berwick. Mr Barnes described that the plans were very loose presently, and with marketing personnel now in place, the next step would be 'soft marketing', identifying what Prudhoe needs and who would be interested in setting up in Prudhoe. With respect to design engineers, ecologists, flood risk, etc. Mr Barnes confirmed that personnel were in place and initial discussions had already taken place with Northumberland County Council (NCC), to identify what is hoped to be achieved.

The initial proposal presented to the meeting included the following:

- 70,000 square feet of retail development (x2 supermarkets) at Low Prudhoe (smaller than the 90,000 square feet in the previous application).
- Other developments at Low Prudhoe that could include a drive-through, travel lodge, petrol station and a family pub.
- A scaled down development on the Front Street, approx. 15,000 square feet (for comparison the Co-op is 15,000 square feet), this is two thirds smaller than the previous 'Sainbury's' application.
- A glass-fronted parade with parking.

Mr Barnes described that the Low Prudhoe site would take in both sides of the roundabout at Princess Way (entrance to Castlefields). These are areas that have been allocated as 'employment' sites as there is zero possibility of them being developed for housing. Mr Barnes concluded that there is only so much demand, so NE would be mindful of the scale of development.

Bringing the Low Prudhoe scheme forward will be the first phase of development as Prudhoe residents are crying out for an alternative offer to the Co-op. Movement and additions on Front Street are expected to bring long-term development and economic benefits to Prudhoe.

¹ Arch is wholly owned by Northumberland County Council and with a board drawn from the public, private and third sectors. Arch is a new kind of economic development business that aims to bring a distinctive and enterprising approach to promoting economic growth in Northumberland. Arch operates on commercial principles, investing in, managing and developing property, and earning fees for managing construction and regeneration projects. Arch recycle profits and secure funding from external sources to resource investment, as well as providing other business services.

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Mr Barnes gave a summary of why NE is driving this project forward:

- To redress the poor retail offer.
- To create jobs and drive down un-employment; the development will create 200 jobs.
- To bring back into use undeveloped land.
- To enhance the Town Centre as a shopping destination, attracting local people to shop as well as attracting visitors.
- As a catalyst for economic success.
- To reduce the car travel as more shopping within the town.

Mr Barnes explained that the next step would be to progress to the planning stage and he gave assurances that there would be a series of presentations and consultation events. Mr Barnes added "We need to speak to the businesses who would be occupying the space and then we will come forward with certainties". Mr Barnes concluded by saying "We hope these ideas show that we have confidence in Prudhoe and aspirations for development in and for the town".

Cllr Mrs Burt was positive about the scheme and acknowledged that the development was a long time coming. Cllr Dobson expressed concern that phase one at Low Prudhoe would happen and then phase two would be forgotten about and the town centre development would be housing only. Mr Barnes replied that like most organisations, NE was effected by the market and an interested petrol station and food retail anchor would drive the Low Prudhoe site as phase one. Mr Barnes added that Sainsbury's did not fall down because NE did not want to deliver the scheme on the Front Street, but because Sainsbury's pulled out and another retailer did not come forward; the desire to develop on Front Street remains strong.

Cllr Mrs Burt stated that her favourite option would always be to develop Front Street initially, she expressed concern that development at Low Prudhoe would take people away from Front Street, but as time goes on a development at Low Prudhoe would be most welcome. Mr Barnes outlined that it would be highly unlikely that the land at Low Prudhoe would be developed as anything other than retail, as the industrial sheds that could be put forward as employment opportunities are far less financially viable. In response to the question as to whether a development at Low Prudhoe would suck trade from the town centre, Mr Barnes assured that investigative reports would seek to anticipate any effect.

Cllr Simpson asserted that historically the only thing that was ever agreed upon was that a retail development should precede any other development and he argued that this should be on Front Street rather than at Low Prudhoe. As an example Cllr Simpson reminded members that the objection to the Tesco Retail Park at Hexham was always that it would take trade away from the town centre, and that it did! Positively however, Cllr Simpson was pleased that there would be community involvement in the scheme. In summary Cllr Simpson supported the need for a town centre (a focal point) and he called for this to be taken into consideration. Mr Barnes replied that any new scheme has to go hand in hand with improvements and that NE wants a scheme that they have more control over and that is deliverable. Mr Barnes testified that NE is a property management business and have a portfolio that includes successful retail opportunities that have not detracted from town centres.

Cllr Price stated that expansion brings with it highway and traffic congestion and asked for assurance that NCC Highways would be involved at an early stage in planning. Mr Barnes answered 'absolutely'; outline plans have already been discussed with Highways who have responded with the state and scope of junctions, as well as what surveys need to be carried out.

Cllr Reid asked what would happen to the Prudhoe United Services Club (Legion) as the development did not appear to take in this site any more. Cllr Reid added that the club have been in a state of limbo for a considerable time and therefore have held back investing in the building. Mr Barnes repeated that

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the Front Street scheme, without the investment from Sainsbury's, was now on a much smaller scale and therefore the Legion was not part of the scheme. Mr Barnes suggested that those businesses who have hung back can now make decisions about the future.

Cllr Mrs J McGee offered that she had the same concerns about phasing and that she would much rather see retail development on Front Street, agreeing with other members that if Low Prudhoe is developed first, it may totally deplete Front Street. With respect to previous plans, Cllr Mrs J McGee asserted that objections did not only relate to the scale of the proposal and the demolition of existing shops but were concerned with flooding and water on the site, stating that proper investigations need to be carried out. Mr Barnes countered that NE could have just brought the Low Prudhoe scheme forward but that they are committed to both schemes, adding that marketing agents are looking at both sites and surface water reports will be carried out. Mr Barnes concluded that he hoped they could wipe the slate clean and that he would be able to come back with a plan that is deliverable but with so much work to do it was unlikely they would be at the planning stage for at least a year.

Before closing the agenda item and thanking Mr Barnes and his colleague for attending, Cllr Mrs Burt added that she had also raised concerns in a meeting with NCC about the local transport link to Low Prudhoe.

1516/149 Report of Planning, Contracts and Works Committee, held on 10th February 2016

It was AGREED to receive the report

Proposed: Cllr Mrs Burt

Seconded: Cllr Simpson

1516/150 Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting, held on 27th January 2016

It was AGREED to receive the minutes as a true record

Proposed: Cllr Mrs Burt

Seconded: Cllr Simpson

1516/151 Matters Arising

Page 4 - 1516/139 *Castle Dene Allotments*: The clerk reported that there had been no response to date from Northumberland Estates regarding the rent increase a Castle Dene Allotments.

Page 6 - 1516/143 *Northumberland CVA (Community & Voluntary Action)*: The clerk reported that Northumberland CVA is happy to attend the March Ordinary Meeting.

Page 8 – The Clerk presented a list of organisations giving thanks to the Town Council for their grant aid awards.

1516/152 Accounts 2015/16

a) **It was AGREED** to receive the bank reconciliations 9th January – 10th February 2016

Proposed: Cllr Gill

Seconded: Cllr Simpson

b) **It was AGREED** to receive the statement of Budget and Expenditure up to 18th February 2016

Proposed: Cllr Gill

Seconded: Cllr Simpson

c) **It was AGREED** to endorse those payment in bold and approve further payments received since the January meeting (schedule of accounts was tabled)

Proposed: Cllr Gill

Seconded: Cllr Simpson

1516/153 North East Combined Authority Transport Manifesto and Consultation

It was AGREED to receive the specimen surveys relating to the transport manifesto. Cllrs discussed that like most manifestos, it was difficult to disagree with anything contained therein. The clerk advised that the surveys presented were for both individual and combined organisation response. **It was**

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AGREED that it would be most appropriate for Cllrs to make an individual on-line response if they were so inclined, but that an organisational response would be inappropriate.

1516/154 New Tyne River Crossing

It was **AGREED** to receive the response from MP Guy Opperman. Cllr Mrs Burt stated that Mr Opperman had simply deflected the request for a new bridge straight back to the town council. Cllr Reid acknowledged that with bids for the dualing of the A69 and major works required on the A1, it was unlikely that a new bridge over the River Tyne would be prioritised, but suggested that there was more MP Guy Opperman could do in terms of lobbying for what the public want. Cllr Reid recalled that in the eighties, MP Alan Amos fought for road improvements for Ponteland at a time when there were other priorities and not much chance of success. Cllr Price reminded Cllr Reid that this was many years ago and times have definitely changed with economics dictating rather than MP's.

Cllr Mrs Burt stated that it was unlikely NCC would support pushing such a scheme as they are so 'strapped for cash'. Cllr Price responded that NCC had managed to spend £40,000,000 that day on a new building. Cllr Mrs Burt replied that it was a 'build to save' scheme and would cost less in the long term.

Cllr Futers stated that the bridge is not safe and that he could see it remaining closed to traffic for some time, with only pedestrian access. Cllr Reid responded that the bridge is expected to open in the summer months but whether that is July, August or September is not clear. Cllr Reid also stated that the riverside path beneath the bridge will re-open without the detour at Easter.

Cllr Price reported that he had attended liaison group meetings regarding the bridge and felt that it was wise to rely on the professional advice given, which is that the bridge is capable of accommodating the traffic that is expected to use it. Cllr Piper replied stating that the bridge is not fit for the 21st Century in view of the fact it cannot accommodate a fire engine or an ambulance.

Cllr Simpson summarised that the suggestion from MP Guy Opperman is for the Town Council to seek support from NCC, Cllr Simpson asked Cllrs if this suggestion was supported. Cllr Mrs J McGee replied that she supported initial statements from Cllr Reid and felt the Town Council should go back to MP Guy Opperman to ask if there is any government funding available. Cllr Mrs J McGee added that developments planned in the town will create more traffic and although the bridge will be repaired and be opened, how long will it last into the future.

Cllr Price recommended that the council seek support from neighbouring town and parish councils in view that Ovingham Bridge is a larger community issue, this would present a linked-up approach. It was **AGREED** to write to NCC, neighbouring parishes and MP Guy Opperman.

Proposed: Cllr G Price

Seconded: Cllr G Simpson

1516/155 Edgewell Cemeteries; Admission of Dogs to Cemeteries

The clerk updated the meeting regarding the outcome of enforcement in Edgewell Cemetery and advised that orders were in place regarding 'dog fouling' and 'dogs off leash' in all cemeteries in Northumberland, with fines of £1,000 if offenders were caught. With this in mind, the clerk advised that there was really no need to change the rules in the cemetery to restrict dogs but simply enforce what was already in place. Cllr Futers acknowledged that the rules may be in place already but that they were being ignored, people either do not know or they are not bothered. Cllr Futers stated that the recommendation of the Cemetery Sub-Committee is to ban dogs, although 'assistance dogs' would be permitted. Cllr Gill agreed that the council were being asked to support the recommendation of the Cemetery Sub-Committee which was to ban dogs. Cllr Mrs Burt suggested that if reports of dog fouling

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were made, enforcement would visit at the times noted in an effort to catch the offender in the act; this would also act as a deterrent.

It was AGREED to support the recommendation of the Cemetery Sub-Committee to ban dogs from Edgewell Cemeteries, with the exception of 'Assistance Dogs'.

Proposed: Cllr A Gill

Seconded: Cllr B Futers

1516/156 Northumbria in Bloom: Judges' Report 2015

Cllr Mrs Burt apologised for the letter, which was received in November, having been mislaid. Cllr Mrs J McGee suggested that the letter should simply be received by the council and passed to the 'In Bloom' Working Group for discussion; **this was AGREED**.

1516/157 Reports from outside bodies

Northumberland County Council – Cllr Reid stated that the budget was finished at 6pm that night and was therefore 'hot off the presses'; reporting budget savings of £11,000,000 and a 3.99% increase in Council Tax. Cllr Reid added that relocation to Ashington was agreed but it still needed to go through planning and that on the basis of evidence presented Cllr Reid was confident that the 'invest to save' scheme would be proven. Cllr Reid advised that the consultation for Haydon Bridge Fire Station is at a close with the cabinet left to make a decision on this; however savings in the fire service have been agreed.

Cllr Mrs J McGee questioned County Cllrs about the report in the Hexham Courant regarding the site of Eastwood Middle School. Cllr Reid advised that there would be public consultation and meetings happening as a matter of course and money had been included in the budget. Cllr Mrs J McGee recommended the town council request a meeting as soon as possible with relevant parties.

Prudhoe Community Partnership – Cllr Mrs Burt advised that Karen Whiteside (Spetchells Centre Manager) was leaving and PCP have sought support from national funders to recruit a new member of staff. Cllr Mrs Burt reported that PCP is financially sound and in a much better position, and although awaiting a start date for the 'Live above a Shop Scheme' (LASS), everything is in place and demolition will begin soon.

1516/158 Correspondence and Publications Correspondence

1. Unlocking Integrated care in Northumberland

Letter of 1 February 2016 from Mr D Evans, Chief Executive, Northumbria Healthcare, and Dr Alistair Blair, Chief Clinical Officer, NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group. The letter announces that "as part of the national NHS Five Year Forward View, health and care partners across Northumberland are working together to support the further 'joining –up' of services by creating a fully integrated 'primary and acute care system' This will build on successful work over many years to integrate health and social care the county and aims to empower local communities to live longer and healthier lives at home, increase focus on prevention and ensure a seamless, high quality experience when people need to access health and care services". The letter comes with a brochure which "outlines the collective vision of how we plan to achieve this exciting ambition for Northumberland".

The letter states that the first phase of 'engagement activity' "seek(s) people's views about how they currently access services and what they would like to see improved. Support will be welcomed to encourage as many people as possible to complete an online survey at the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/NorthumberlandVanguard>. Ongoing developments will be reported, for instance at www.northumberland.nhs.uk.

It was AGREED to receive the letter

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Letter dated 4 February 2016 (previously forwarded to members by email) from Mr G Paul, Director, Planning and Economy, NCC. The letter states that “as part of the Council’s ongoing need to define new ways of working in order to deliver services as efficiently as possible whilst maintaining acceptable standard levels, a new Community Regeneration team is being established. This will bring together the Council’s community-based functions relating to the strategic partnership with parish and town councils; local growth and regeneration; and social enterprise development into one unified team. Mr Paul notes that this will ‘inevitably’ mean changes to current working practices and personnel, but he states that NCC remains committed to the relationship with local councils as enshrined in the Local Councils’ Charter. This issue will be the focus of the next meeting of the Town and Parish Liaison Working Group.

Whilst ongoing developments will be reported to local councils, the letter concludes by asking local councils to “be mindful of the fact that a number of officers that you are in regular contact with, will be directly affected by what is a challenging and difficult process”.

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the letter and note the advice therein

3. The Children’s Foundation: Request for Donation

Letter dated 5 February 2016 from Libby Nolan, Fundraising Manager for the Foundation, which is based at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle. The letter states “we are the leading children’s charity in the North East of England funding research and practical interventions to improve the health and well-being of children and young people in the region. Last year the charity directly helped, involved or affected the lives of almost 30,000 children across the North East, and it also funds a number of community based projects. The letter is seeking donations towards its ‘...because minding matters’ appeal, where the Foundation is “striving to work across the region to tackle the mental health and wellbeing issues which children face.” The letter notes that, based on national statistics, mental health issues could be impacting on potentially 4,600 children in the county, and states “we are looking at a range of different services and interventions which we are trying to raise money for to try and tackle this issue facing our children.”

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the letter and to advise that the Grant Aid for 2016/17 was passed but invite the organisation to present what they do at a Town Council meeting

4. Gateshead Council: Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Publication of Modifications and Submission of Documents to the Examiner

Letter dated 5 February 2016 from Mr N Wilkinson, Spatial Planning and Environment Manager, Development and Public Protection, Communities and Environment, Gateshead Council. The letter attaches the CIL Statement of Modifications. This sets out the changes that have been made to the Draft Charging Schedule (DCS) since its first publication. The Statement sets out what you have to do should you wish to be heard by the Examiner on these modifications: the Statement can also be viewed on the Council’s website (see below). The letter adds that the DCS has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination in spring 2016. The DCS and all supporting documents may also be viewed on the Council’s website. These documents may also be viewed at main libraries in Gateshead.

The Gateshead Council website is at www.gateshead.gov.uk. Any questions can be directed to Chris Carr in the Spatial Planning and Environment Team at chris carr@gateshead.gov.uk or on 0191 433 3415.

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the information

5. Northumberland County Council: Government Funding for Principal Authorities

Email dated 12 February 2016 (previously forwarded to members by email) sent on behalf of Cllr Grant Davey, Leader, Northumberland County Council. The email states “You may well be aware of

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the extra government funding for some councils which was announced in Parliament this week by Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

This will mean the County Council will receive an extra £3.15m over the next two years. Whilst this extra funding is welcomed, unfortunately it does not change the overall financial position of the Council. This money is one-off funding and still means we have to cut £58 million from our budget over the next four years. This is on top of the £148 million we've had to cut since 2011. As required in the settlement from the Chancellor it also means we will still need to raise council tax for local residents by 16% over the next four years.

It unfortunately means we have to make some tough decisions and, despite our best efforts, for residents this means they will still have to pay more and receive less. If the position changes substantially I will keep you updated, and the budget will be discussed at full council on February 24th.

I hope the attached news release [also previously forwarded] provides a fuller picture of the future we are facing as a result of this government's cuts."

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the letter and note the advice therein

6. Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC): Portal System for hosting of Local Council websites

Email dated 23 February 2016, from David Francis and Julia Plinston of NALC. The email states "In the February edition of NALC e News, we announced that we are considering commissioning the provision of a 'Portal System' to host Parish Council Websites on behalf of our member- councils. The idea for providing this came from our members, and delegates at our recent series of events on the Transparency Code indicated a considerable amount of support for the idea.

The aim of providing such a system would be to make it easier for councils to meet their obligations under the Transparency Code regarding publishing key information on a website. We anticipate that the costs of setting up the system would be fully covered by the national Transparency Fund and that we would be able to achieve economies of scale in ongoing hosting and support costs.

We now need to confirm whether there is sufficient interest in the scheme to make it worthwhile, and to assess the features our members would require from the system. We would therefore be very grateful if you could take a little time to fill in our online survey by clicking

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/NALCwebsiteportalproposal>. Ideally we would like responses by the end of Thursday 3rd March. If you have any queries, please do contact us, as soon as possible."

Note: having checked with NALC, this offer is aimed *principally* at those small councils that are seeking to comply for the first time with the requirement of the Transparency Code to provide basic governance information on a website. However, NALC would be pleased to hear from any larger council that might be interested in the scheme.

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the information but comments noted that the Town Council website was working effectively as it was.

7. Northumbrian Water Limited (NWL): Water Charges at Edgewell Allotments

Letter dated 22 February 2016 from Helen Lumsdon, Customer Accounts Manager, NWL. The letter notifies the Council that from 1 April 2016, the bill in respect of water supply at this allotment site will be based on an *assessed charge*. The letter notes that this site is currently un-metered, and explains how the bill be calculated. Noting that the amount of water used is estimated at exceeding 300 cubic metres, NWL assess that the annual bill on this new assessed charge will be £632.15. With the current bill standing at £98.50, this would represent an increase of £533.65 for the year. However, NWL proposes to phase in the new charges over *two* years, with the new charge for 2016-17 being the current charge (£98.50) plus 50% of the increase (£266.83), totalling £365.33. The letter states that the property type (allotments / garden) has been used to allocate the assessed charges band: the Council can request a change by contacting the Valuation Office Agency. Further help with regards to NWL tariffs and charges can be found on the NWL website. Also, if the Council accepts

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the property type classification but thinks that water usage would be lower than the assessed water usage, the Council could consider applying for a meter.

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the information and to investigate the cost of a water meter as well as trying to assess actual water usage. It was AGREED that any further findings would come to the Planning, Contract and Works Committee.

8. Post Office Limited: Prudhoe Post Office, 81 Front Street, Prudhoe NE42 5PU

Letter dated 23 February 2016, from Mr S Drinkwater, Regional Network Manager. The letter states that Post Office Limited “confirm that we will be proceeding with the relocation of the above branch to 63/64 Front Street, Prudhoe, NE42 5AA, where it will operate as one of our new main style Post Office branches. The letter notes that feedback from the consultation was largely positive with the new longer opening hours (0900 to 1730 Monday to Saturday) being welcomed. In response to representation made regarding a disabled parking bay at the new location, the letter states “although there is no disabled parking space at the proposed site and the new operator has no control over parking arrangements...he would be happy to approach the local authority and suggest that a disabled parking bay be provided near their shop.”

The letter recognises that “the Post Office plays an important part in the lives of customers, particularly to elderly and disabled customers and we want to make our services as accessible as possible.” The letter describes the layout of the branch and notes that the same range of Post Office products and services will be available. The letter notes that subject to any required planning permission, the cash machine facility will be transferring to the new site. The letter states that the new operator of the facility was selected following successful completion of the Post Office application process; Post Office Limited has worked closely with the new operator to ensure “optimum use of the space within the store...that access...is kept clear and free of obstacles...that customers including wheelchair users have sufficient space and privacy while conducting their business.” “Staff will be fully trained and on hand with staffing levels aligned to meet customer demand.” The letter provides details about the publicity for the move, and further details about the services on offer are provided in table form at the end of the letter. The letter concludes “I am confident that this move will benefit the local community through a modern refurbished branch with longer opening hours, allowing customers good access to Post Office services whilst helping to provide future sustainability for the branch.”

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the information

Tabled Items

1. Mitry-Mory: “L’Evolution” news magazine, Fevrier 2016
2. North-East Combined Authority “Our Journey” “A 20 year Transport Manifesto for the North East (ref. agenda item 8) (includes hard copies of consultation response questionnaires)
3. The National Allotment Society: Allotment & Leisure Gardener, Issue 1 of 2016
4. The National Association of Memorial Masons, Newsletter, January 2016 (along with renewal information)
5. Paul Stangroom Fine Art Gallery – Opening, 26 March 2016, invitation cards

To approve a motion, that in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press and public be excluded for consideration of the final item, in accordance with Section 68 of the Council’s Standing Orders:-

1516/159 Confidential Minute of the Ordinary Meeting, held on 27th January 2016

It was AGREED to receive the minute as a true record

Proposed: Cllr Gill

Seconded: Cllr Mrs C Cuthbert