

PRUDHOE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Ordinary Meeting held in The Spetchells Centre at 7:00pm, 27th January 2016**Present**

Cllr Mrs Burt (Chair), Cllr Mrs Cuthbert, Cllr Piper, Cllr Mrs N McGee, Cllr Mrs J McGee, Cllr Price, Cllr Simpson (*left after item 1415/133*), Cllr Couchman, Cllr Reid, Cllr Graham, Cllr Ms Rose, Cllr McCreedy, Cllr Gill, Cllr Futers, Cllr Dobson

1516/125 Apologies for Absence County Cllr Mrs A Dale

Cllr Futers asked the Chair to consider moving agenda item 10 to the end of the meeting (after agendaitem19, Personnel Committee). Conversely, the draft budget contained figures relating to staffing and office accommodation which suggested the Personnel Committee has already met and made decisions.

Cllr Mrs Burt stated that item 10 was simply to agree that the Personnel Committee should meet as well as agreeing what should be considered, but if members wished it to be moved that was fine. Cllr Mrs Burt stated that the Personnel Committee has not agreed any recommendations but that the money has been included in the budget so that additional resources could be agreed at a later date, if required. Cllr Mrs Burt concluded that any further comments should be made as part of the budget discussion later in the meeting.

1516/126 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Mrs E Burt, Cllr E Dobson, Cllr D Couchman – Member of Northumberland Credit Union.

1516/127 The Northumberland Estates

Cllr Mrs Burt read the response from Mr Colin Barnes (Northumberland Estates, Director of Planning) to appropriately defer attendance until the February Ordinary Meeting:

“As you will be aware the approved scheme for the town centre has been unable to be progressed due to well publicised changes in the retail market. We do however remain committed to bringing forward development in Prudhoe, and are currently working on revised proposals for the town with a development partner and expect to be in a position to share these with the Town Council shortly and in advance of any planning application. I would be happy to do a short presentation and up-date to the Council at their February meeting”.

It was AGREED to receive the response and look forward to the update in February.

1516/128 Report of Planning, Contracts and Works Committee, held on 13th January 2016

It was AGREED to receive the report

Proposed: Cllr G Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Mrs C Cuthbert

1516/129 Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting, held on 16th December 2015

It was AGREED to receive the minutes as a true record

Proposed: Cllr A Piper

Seconded: Cllr K Graham

1516/130 Matters Arising None**1516/131 Accounts 2015/16**

a) **It was AGREED** to receive the bank reconciliations 10th December 2015 – 8th January 2016

Proposed: Cllr G Simpson

Seconded: Cllr Ms June Rose

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b) **It was AGREED** to receive the statement of Budget and Expenditure up to 21st January 2016

Proposed: Cllr A Reid

Seconded: Cllr E Dobson

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

Proposed: Cllr A Gill

Seconded: Cllr G McCreedy

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 following item, in accordance with Section 68 of the Council's Standing Orders:-

1516/132 Grant Aid Applications 2016/17

Cllrs considered the grant aid applications received as well as the recommendations of the working group.

The Grant Aid Awards **AGREED** are included at Appendix a).

Proposed: Cllr Mrs E Burt

Seconded: Cllr G Simpson

1516/133 Budget 2016/17

Cllr Mrs E Burt introduced the draft budget for 2016/17.

Cllr Gill questioned whether it was appropriate to allocate £15,000 to the Budget and £15,000 to the Asset Reserve Fund for Eastwood Park in view that there is no agreed project to move forward, further stating this was not a Town Council asset. Cllr Gill asked the Officers if money should be allocated in the budget 'specifically' if it is unlikely to be spent in that financial year. Cllr Mrs Burt responded that the money was in the Asset Reserve Fund (ARF) for this reason and the purpose of the ARF is to build reserves for capital projects. Cllr Gill responded that there was £15,000 in a budget heading and £15,000 in the ASF. Cllr Mrs Burt suggested this was an error and that there should be £30,000 ear-marked for Eastwood Park in the ARF. The administrator advised that this was not how the draft budget on the table was presented. Cllr Dobson recommended that the £15,000 that was shown in the Eastwood Park budget heading be moved to the ARF. The Administrator clarified that this would increase the ARF to £70,000. Cllrs Mrs Burt and Cllr Reid disagreed and asked that the ARF be held at £55,000 an increase of £15,000, with £30,000 of that money ear-marked for Eastwood Park.

Cllr Mrs J McGee supported funding for Eastwood Park claiming that people have suggested to her that Prudhoe Town Council does not care about the people of West Wylam and that she does and would like to see improvement for families and young people. Cllr Reid continued that there is an opportunity to work with partners to come up with a legitimate and creative scheme, adding that funding opportunities do not come up very often and there is money available from other sources.

Cllr Futers took offense at the suggestion that only Cllr Mrs J McGee cared about West Wylam, claiming that he also cared about West Wylam and as a Town Cllr he represented the interests of the whole town, not just his own ward.

Cllr Mrs Cuthbert asked if Active Northumberland is still involved in developments. Cllr Mrs Burt responded that although Bruce Ledger was no longer in place, Active Northumberland is still pushing this forward. Cllr McCreedy reported that Bruce Ledger has been replaced by Nathan Rogerson.

Cllr Dobson acknowledged that Eastwood Park was not owned or managed by Prudhoe Town Council, but expressed that this was of no concern to the young people of West Wylam, they simply wanted a park and playing field fit for purpose. Cllr Dobson added that the people of Prudhoe are the town's most

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important asset, especially the young people, and in his opinion this would be a wise investment in them.

It was AGREED that Eastwood Park be removed as a budget heading and that £30,000 be earmarked for Eastwood Park development in the Asset Reserve Fund.

Cllr Gill asked why there was a budget allocation for a 20 hour administrator when nothing has been agreed by the council. Cllr Mrs Burt clarified that at the 'visioning meeting' of the council the wellbeing of staff was touched upon, and in particular the additional hours worked by the administrator; it was expected that staffing will be reviewed and an allocation has been suggested to allow the council to do something if needed. Cllr Mrs Burt concluded that the money has been put into the draft budget but nothing has been agreed, adding if it was not included now, then nothing could be done for twelve months. Cllr Gill asked that if a review suggested additional staff/hours are not required, will the money remain as 'unspent'.

Cllr Futers suggested that in view of the fact that no review has taken place and therefore no firm conclusions have been drawn, why not included the money in the 'Asset Reserve Fund'. Cllrs Mrs Burt advised that this was not capital expenditure. Cllr Futers suggested the 'Contingency Budget' alongside the money for additional office space would be more appropriate, moved to the appropriate heading if deemed necessary but not showing as 'unspent' if it is not. The clerk advised that including the money in 'Contingency' would be advisable as it could be moved if necessary and would not show as a under-spend if found unnecessary.

Cllr Simpson expressed surprise that the decision to include money in the budget was becoming a topical issue of controversy as this had often been the case of budgets in the past. Cllr Mrs Burt acknowledged that budget control has significantly improved over the years with the systems introduced by the administrator, and the council did not now end the year with significant under spends.

It was AGREED to approve the 2016/17 Budget of £298,025 (including the use of section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 to pay for the TV Licence Grant Scheme and West Northumberland Youth Service)

Proposed: Cllr Reid

Seconded: Cllrs Mrs J McGee

It was also AGREED to approve an Asset Reserve Fund of £55,000 to be held separate from the budget

Proposed: Cllr Reid

Seconded: Cllrs Mrs J McGee

It was also AGREED to send a Precept Demand for £295,860 to Northumberland County Council

Proposed: Cllr Reid

Seconded: Cllrs Mrs J McGee

1516/134 Personnel Matters moved to the end of the meeting

Item moved to the end of the meeting as requested by Cllr Futers and **AGREED** by members.

1516/135 Henry Travers (Cllr Mrs J McGee)

Cllr Mrs J McGee asked the council to consider writing to English Heritage to have a 'blue plaque' installed for Prudhoe-born Henry Travers (*A blue plaque is a permanent sign installed in a public place to commemorate a link between that location and a famous person or event, serving as a historical marker*). Cllr Mrs J McGee stated that she hoped Cllrs have seen and heard the recent press and social media coverage about Mr Henry Travers and the film 'It's a Wonderful Life', and went on to describe the film. Cllr Mrs J McGee continued that it was 70 years since this world wide celebrated film was made and the council should consider asking English Heritage to place a blue plaque on 'The Glade', an area

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central to the town and also befitting the Christmas theme, as the location of the Christmas Lights Switch-On.

Cllr Futers stated there was a dispute whether Henry Travers was born in Prudhoe and argued that there was not much could be claimed he had done in the town since he was believed to have left aged two. Cllr Futers said he would be more in favour of supporting a plaque for Ted Garrett, the only MP to come from Prudhoe, someone who actually did something in the town.

Cllr Mrs J McGee agreed with the point about Ted Garrett but responded that when the town had something to shout about, it should. Cllr Graham supported the idea. Cllr Reid offered that he had not heard of Henry Travers until prior to the meeting and as a result 'googled' him; some reports stated that he was born in Berwick. Cllr Reid continued that Berwick has certainly recognised his attachment to the area and he has relatives who still lived there. Cllr Reid finished by stating that he did not have a problem with Prudhoe having a 'plaque' but the facts had to be correctly established.

Cllr Couchman stated that he believed that 'blue plaques' are only located in London and that their commemoration relates to the famous person and the particular building on which they are placed. Cllr Gill agreed that the plaque commemorates a person with a building but believes they can be installed by anyone.

Cllr Mrs Burt summarised that considering the mixed response it would be preferable to firm up the details. It was agreed that Cllr Mrs J McGee would investigate further with the help of the staff if necessary. (The birth certificate of Mr Henry Travers was circulated, with Prudhoe stated as place of birth).

1516/136 New Bridge

Cllr Mrs J McGee asked for councillors' support to agree to write a letter to MP Guy Opperman and the Government to seek commitment and funding for a new bridge over the River Tyne, downstream of Prudhoe. Cllr Mrs J McGee stated that the present situation has been going on for too long now and reminded members of past plans for a new bridge. Cllr Mrs McGee stated that the plans of 2007 should be reviewed with a view to getting a bridge that is fit for the 21st Century and a town the size of Prudhoe.

Cllr Mrs J McGee received rousing support from Cllr Futers, Cllr Ms Rose, Cllr Mrs Cuthbert, Cllr Gill and Cllr Piper. Cllr Reid suggested this presented a good opportunity to contact MP Guy Opperman and although the response will most likely to be no, it is still right to ask the question. Cllr Futers suggested MP Guy Opperman be asked to include a new bridge in the dualling of the A69. Cllr Price suggested the letter should state the case that HGV's should be taken out of and beyond small villages.

1516/137 Prudhoe Market

It was AGREED to receive the report

It was AGREED to endorse the decisions of the Markets group. The market will now be held on the first Saturday of each month. It was AGREED to look into the cost of placing an advert in the 'What's On' section of the Hexham Courant and to ask if NCC are able to contribute to the cost.

1516/138 Town Council Gazebos

It was AGREED to approve the recommendation of the Events Group that gazebos now be 'available' for use 'free of charge'. Those wishing to use the gazebos will be subject to the same conditions of use as previously agreed.

Proposed: Cllr G McCreedy

Seconded: Cllrs Mrs J McGee

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The Clerk presented a letter from The Northumberland Estates detailing a rent increase for Castle Dene Allotments, from £90/year (£30/year for each site) to £150/year (£50/year for each site). The clerk reported that previous rent reviews had taken place infrequently and the letter proposed also to reduce the rent review period from 10 years to 3 years.

Cllrs discussed that this represented a large increase of 67% as well as a much shorter rent review period. The Clerk stated that as the landowner, Northumberland Estates are within their rights to increase the rent, with proper notice, as well as reduce the review period. Cllr Gill suggested the council reply stating that they wished the rent review period to remain at 10 years and that the increase was too steep. The Clerk clarified that even if a response is made, the letter makes clear that the rent demand will be issued on these terms.

It was AGREED to write to Northumberland Estates stating that the council are unhappy with the level of rent increase and the reduction in the rent review period.

1516/140 Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership

Cllr Mrs Burt asked for a volunteer to attend the regular meetings of the Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership Group. Cllr Price offered that he would make an effort to attend the meetings, therefore agreeing to be a representative of the town council.

1516/141 Prudhoe Town Council Young People's Forum

It was AGREED to receive the minutes of 18th November.

1516/142 Reports from outside bodies

Northumberland County Council – Cllr Reid reported that they are heading towards agreeing the budget on 24th February and significant cuts are envisaged. Cllr Reid suggested that the feeling is, if departments/sectors survive in this financial year, they may not in subsequent years as a further £80 million is required to be saved over the next 2-3 years.

Cllr Reid reported excitement at the Tall Ships Race coming to Blyth and confirmed that the Tour of Britain (TOB) Cycle Race will return in 2017. Cllr Reid expressed that the success of the TOB in 2015 will create more competition in 2017, with more communities vying for a stage start or finish.

Cllr Mrs Burt described that a report of the Youth Service has been heard at a Scrutiny Panel and cost savings will generally see Senior Management reduced, along with areas being more widely spread, thus reducing middle managers also, but that spending at a local level will be maintained.

Prudhoe Community Partnership - Cllr Mrs Burt described a transition period with a need to recruit additional trustees and a new chairman. Cllr Mrs Burt reported that the Partnership was financially secure, although there are no great balances, issues with the Windsor Bakery shop and flat scheme have been ironed out and demolition is expected soon.

Pathforce – A report of the last meeting was tabled. Cllr Mrs Burt recommended sending Prudhoe Pathforce a formal letter of appreciation for the work they do in and around the town, especially dealing with 'rights of way' issues. It was AGREED to receive the report and to send a letter.

East Tynedale Parish Forum – Cllr Reid circulated photographs of the damage caused to Ovingham Bridge. Cllr Reid reported lots of discussion about flooding issues and in particular that some homes in Ovingham flooded that have not previously. Additionally Cllr Reid reported that some smaller parishes are thinking of having a 'handyman' that is shared between them, as well as talking about a list of approved contractors. Cllr Maggie Hunt of Broomley and Stocksfield Parish Council offered up for

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download the great many policies on their website; she described at the Forum Meeting that she has taken considerable time to produce them and has no problem with anyone personalising them for their own council procedures.

NALC/NCC Joint Meeting – Cllr Dobson reported that devolution was generally welcome. Additionally there was talk of the new planning system with comments that pre-planning has not yet been tested. Further to offers from Cllr Maggie Hunt, Cllr Dobson reported that model documents are also available on the NALC website.

Northumbria Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) – it was **AGREED** to receive the report.

1516/143 Tabled and Correspondence

Correspondence

1. Gateshead Council: Consultation on Publication of CIL Draft Charging Schedule

Letter dated 18 December 2015 from Gateshead Council, advising of the above consultation. This was reported to this Council (PTC) in October 2015. However, Gateshead Council announces as follows: "...it has come to the Council's attention that there was a cartographic error on the Draft Charging Schedule – Residential Charging Zone Map that was initially published in October 2015 that has now been corrected to include the Dunston Hill housing site.

RECEIVE

2. Northumberland CVA (Community & Voluntary Action): Request for Donation

Letter received 27th January from Anne Lyall, Chief Executive Officer of Northumberland CVA. The letter states that the N-CVA "provides information, support and advice to voluntary groups throughout [the county]." The letter states that N-CVA's work is "part supported through a commission with [NCC] that enables us to provide a number of services to local areas including funding fairs, supporting in setting up groups and organisations, support to Trustees through a Trustee Network, training for staff, volunteers and trustees and volunteering support for individuals and organisations." However, the NCC support does not cover N-CVA's costs, so the charity is "constantly seeking funding to ensure our services can continue to meet the needs of local communities and organisations." The letter asks that the Council consider making a donation to N-VCVA's work *or*, as an alternative to making a donation, to consider 'buying-in' from a range of services offered by N-CVA. These include funding surgeries for local groups, neighbourhood planning, regular 'drop-in' services to help community groups develop and support in developing mechanisms for engaging active citizens within communities.

Cllr Mrs Burt proposed the council invite NVCVA to a council meeting to state what they do.

AGREED

Tabled Items

1. Mitry-Mory: "L'Evolution" news magazine, Janvier 2016, with letter to readers from the Mayor of Mitry-Mory, conveying her best wishes for happiness and success for 2016
2. Wylam Parish Council: "The Wylam Globe", Newsletter, No.119, Winter 2015
3. Society of Local Council Clerks: "The Clerk" Magazine, Vol.47 No.1 January 2016
4. Clerks & Councils Direct Magazine, Issue 103, January 2016
5. Royal Horticultural Society: "Grass Roots", The RHS Community Update, Issue 24, Winter 2015-16
6. Northumberland County Council: Highway Services in Winter, published guide, covering gritting, grit bins, snow clearance, winter driving tips, sources of information, advice and weather / road updates, along with maps showing the NCC precautionary gritting network

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It was AGREED to receive the tabled items.

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:-

1516/144 Personnel Matters

It was AGREED to arrange a meeting of the Personnel Committee to consider office accommodation, staff workload and additional administrative support.

1516/145 Personnel Committee

The Clerk addressed the council and advised that in order to ensure a properly constituted meeting of the Personnel Committee, the following must be adhered to (this does not include an informal meeting, that could be held but should avoid pre-determination):

- A summons and agenda must be produced by the clerk.
- The intention to hold the committee meeting must be advertised in exactly the same way as a council meeting, with three clear days' public notice being given. The personnel committee would usually be held without the presence of the Press and public, but this does not excuse the council from issuing a public agenda with the normal notice.
- The meeting must be minuted in the usual way, and generally by the clerk or other appointed officer, and the minutes approved at the next meeting. The Personnel Committee should not exclude the clerk, even if the meeting is to specifically discuss the clerk's performance, the clerk would simply be asked to leave the meeting for that purpose, and would return.
- The meeting may not be held in a member's home.

Failure to follow any of the above would result in the meeting being rendered unlawful and any decisions would be null and void. The clerk reiterated that the Personnel Committee should be treated in exactly the same way as the Planning, Contracts and Works Committee.

The clerk went on to describe that as the council's 'Proper Officer' he was duty bound to give advice and it is for the council's officers to carry out any work required. Additionally, the Clerk described that as the line manager of council staff, the working hours of the administrator should be discussed with him in the first instance and any review relevant to office accommodation, staff workload and additional administrative support should be carried out by him.

Cllr Price asked for clarification of the present situation, where an informal preliminary meeting was held on 11th January 2016 for which the clerk issued a letter and asked for a response to questions in relation to the meeting. The clerk responded that the Personnel Committee may have an informal meeting but this cannot be reported to the council as a meeting of the committee. The clerk added that the letter sent to the committee asked for a response rather than giving any advice, as the office was unclear as to the set-up of the meeting, no response was given, granted the letter was issued late.

It was AGREED to RECEIVE and note the advice of the clerk.

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GROUP	Requested in 2016/17	Recommended 2016/17
1st Prudhoe Guides	£1,000	£500
Carers Northumberland	£998	£750
Dragon Tale Theatre Group	£600	£600
Friends of Prudhoe Woods F.O.P.W.	£100	£100
Jack & Jill Pre-school Nursery	£1,500	£500
Mickley Aged Peoples Treat	£250	£250
Northumberland Credit Union Limited, Prudhoe	£350	£350
Prudhoe (PGA) Town Show	£500	£500
Prudhoe Aged People's Treat	any amount	£750
Prudhoe Air Training Corps	£250	£250
Prudhoe and District U3A	£200	£200
Prudhoe Army Cadet Force	£250	£250
Prudhoe Castle Bowling Club	£200	£200
Prudhoe Community Allotment	£200	£200
Prudhoe Community Band	£750	£750
Prudhoe Community Choir	any amount	£200
Prudhoe Community Events Support Group	£774	£750
Prudhoe Cricket Club	£200	£200
Prudhoe East Centre Motor Project	£500	£350
Prudhoe Gleemen	£200	£200
Prudhoe Ground Force	£50	£50
Prudhoe Ladies Netball Club	£850	£500
Prudhoe Leisure Group	£650	£650
Prudhoe Methodist Church	£400	£0
Prudhoe Over 50s Forum	£250	£250
Prudhoe Patchers	£730	£250
Prudhoe Pathforce	£200	£200
Prudhoe Town Twinning Association	£300	£250
Prudhoe Town Women Football Club	£1,500	£500
Prudhoe Youth Football Club	£2,435	£1,000
Radio Prudhoe	£500	£250
Spetchells Conservation Group	£800	£250
Sport Tynedale	£300	£250
Tyne Valley Canoe Club	£2,500	£500
Tynedale Hospice at Home	£1,500	£500
Violet Shock Theatre Company	£500	£500
	£22,287	£13,750
Additional Community based financial support	Awarded in 2016/17	
<i>West Northumberland CAB</i>	£10,600	
<i>West Northumberland Youth Service</i>	£20,000	
<i>Prudhoe Community Partnership</i>	£5,500	