

PRUDHOE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Ordinary Meeting held in The Spetchells Centre at 7:00pm, 28th September 2016

PRESENT

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

1617/065 Apologies for Absence None

1617/066 Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting, held on 27th July 2016

It was AGREED to receive the minutes as a true record.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs E Burt

Seconded: Cllr A Gill

1617/067 Matters Arising

page 1, 1617/045 Speeding in Prudhoe

Cllr McCreedy suggested that as the complaint had been received by the town council by a resident directly, that any update should be relayed back to the resident through the town council.

It was AGREED to update the resident.

Cllr Mrs J McGee recommended that the Community Speed Watch initiative should be publicised on the town council website. **It was AGREED.**

page 2, 1617/045 Speeding in Prudhoe

The clerk updated the meeting that he had recently spoken with an officer from Gateshead MBC regarding warning signs of the junction on the A694. The clerk confirmed a verbal agreement to meet with Cllrs and NCC traffic officers to look at whether a warning sign could be placed on the Gateshead side.

With regard to the flashing speed sign that was mentioned as having been purchased from County Cllrs funding, the clerk advised that he had not located this yet.

page 5 1617/051 Centenary Fields

The clerk confirmed that he had contacted Northumberland Estates and was awaiting a response.

page 5, 1617/055 Local Transport Plan (LTP) Programme 2017-18

Cllr Gill questioned how the council's priorities were reflected in the minutes, stating that it was only sections of the road at Redwell Road/South Road/Drawback that required re-surfacing.

page 6 1617/058 West Mickley Play Area

Cllr Mrs J McGee advised that she and Cllr Mrs Cuthbert had visited the play area and some ideas had been put forward. **It was AGREED** that the matter be put on the Planning, Contract and Works agenda to agree to go out to play providers.

Cllr Reid reminded Cllrs that there was an agreement to ask the Coal Authority to attend a meeting with regard to flooding issues, and also to arrange a presentation by the Land of Oak and Iron. The clerk responded that there was a letter from the Land of Oak and Iron in correspondence. It was reasserted that the council should make contact with the Coal Authority regarding flooding issues.

page 7, 1617/059 Events Committee

The clerk confirmed that pea-lights had been removed from Oaklands and the trees have gone, these were replaced on the trees at the Road Ends. Pea-lights have also been installed on the trees in The Glade.

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The clerk also confirmed that he had discussed lights being installed at Mickley with the contractor and that this was feasible, either taking power from The Jiggery Pokery or another power source.

Cllr Mrs Burt asked if a site had been identified for a Christmas tree. Cllr Mrs Cuthbert stated that Mickley first School would host the tree and they were looking into where it would go in order for it to be visible from the roadside.

1617/067 Minutes of the Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Planning Contract & Works Committee Meeting held on 10th August 2016

It was AGREED to receive the minutes as a true record.

Proposed: Cllr B Futers Seconded: Cllr G Simpson

It was noted that some Cllrs were not recorded by title in the attendance record. **It was AGREED** this would be amended. Also Cllr McCreedy was recorded as having seconded a proposal and he was not present. **It was AGREED** this should be amended to show Cllr B Futers.

1617/068 Matters Arising

page 1, Humbles Wood Play Area

It was AGREED to add this to the next meeting of the Planning, Contracts and Works meeting, to feedback any information received from Gentoo. Cllr Mrs J McGee repeated that Gentoo did agree they would incorporate a swing and a slide into the scheme and a better type of wood.

page 2, Kimberly Park Football

It was **AGREED** to inspect the football ground on Thursday 13th October at 2pm. The clerk confirmed he would send out the date of inspection to the manager and as a reminder to Cllrs.

page 3, Formal Floral Bedding Contract

Cllr Mrs J McGee confirmed that the tendering group would meet to open and review tenders received on Monday at 5pm.

page 4, CCTV

The clerk confirmed that no further information has been received regarding CCTV in Prudhoe. Cllr Mrs Burt highlighted that at a recent West Community Safety Hub meeting Inspector Kevin Oades suggested that those cameras that were in working order would continue to be monitored but those not in working order would not be replaced as CCTV is no longer considered a major crime prevention tool.

Cllr Futers agreed that he had been told the same, as well as that Prudhoe cameras are monitored in Gateshead. Cllr Futers commented that those shops that operated CCTV did so as a prevention to shop lifting, the cameras were no use on a dark street.

page 4, Pedestrian Access at Highfield Park

The clerk advised that the contract had been offered to Dolan Plant Hire.

1617/069 Report of Planning Contract & Works Committee Meeting held on 14th September 2016

It was AGREED to receive the report

Proposed: Cllr Mrs E Burt Seconded: Cllr G Simpson

1617/070 Accounts

a) Bank Reconciliations 9th July – 9th September 2016

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It was AGREED to receive the bank reconciliations

Proposed: Cllr A Gill

Seconded: Cllr E Dobson

Cllr Gill questioned the cost for bank charges and professional fees. The administrator explained that this included the solicitor costs in relation to title deeds for Edgewell Cemetery and all bank charges. The administrator clarified that the accounts paid previously reflect what is shown in the bank reconciliation and this could be itemised in any way the council prefer. **It was AGREED** that bank charges should be separated.

b) Statement of Expenditure from 1st April to 22nd September 2016

Cllr Mrs J McGee asked if Cllrs had any questions relating to the budget at this half-year stage.

Cllr Mrs J McGee explained that she had already questioned the money remaining in 'Bus Shelters' and this related to funding received for the Mickley bus shelter that has not yet been invoiced by NCC. The administrator advised that she had requested the invoice.

It was AGREED to receive the Statement of Expenditure

Proposed: Cllr Mrs E Burt

Seconded: Cllr Mrs N McGee

c) Accounts to pay/paid. The schedule of accounts was tabled.

Cllr Dobson asked what the cheque made payable to Sarah Eden for cash referred to. The administrator explained that this was the only way the council could withdraw cash to allow refunds under the TV License scheme.

Cllr Mrs Burt raised whether the council should investigate a Town Council credit card as there were two instances where staff were claiming reimbursement from the council for purchase made on behalf of the council. **It was AGREED** to look into this.

It was AGREED to pay the accounts listed and endorse those accounts already paid

Proposed: Cllr Mrs E Burt

Seconded: Cllr Mrs N McGee

1617/071 Annual Return

a) It was AGREED to receive the Notice of Conclusion of External Audit.

b) It was AGREED to receive the Issues Arising Report and respective Action Plan and to endorse all the actions contained therein

Cllr Mrs Burt stated that there was no need to go into the reasons why the Annual Return was 'qualified' but that it was obvious in view of the omissions from both the Clerk and the Administrator that the Annual Return should be completed as soon as possible. The administrator responded that the 2015/16 Annual Return was completed as soon as possible but the fact remained that it was too late. Cllr Mrs J McGee clarified that in the future this would not be the case.

Cllr Dobson suggested that completing work 'away from the office' should be removed when referring to completing the Annual Return away from interruptions. **It was AGREED.**

Cllr Mrs J McGee recommended that, as in previous years, it would be beneficial to have two Cllrs nominated to carry out and audit of internal controls. The administrator interjected that this was

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not an option and that it was a legislative requirement that the council carry out a 'Review of the effectiveness of internal controls'. Cllr Reid and Cllr Price volunteered themselves.

Cllr Mrs J McGee stated that the issues arising report demonstrated that the external auditor is more thorough each year and that in view that the Budget and Expenditure had some errors in previous months, she would like to request that those Cllrs involved in the 'Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Controls' also took a keen interest in the accuracy of the Budget and Expenditure.

c) **It was AGREED** to endorse the publication of all Annual Return information as already carried out by the administrator

1617/071 The 2017/18 Local Government Finance Settlement: Technical Consultation Paper

The clerk clarified that the technical consultation stated that both band D levels and a precept of over £500,000 would result in a limit to the precept rise, without a referendum. At this moment in time Prudhoe meets only one of the conditions so would not be subject to this.

Cllr Mrs Burt stated that the council should respond stating that the fulfilment of both criteria should be essential and that anything short of that would burden smaller council's with a costly referendum that would outweigh any potential rise in precept.

Cllr Reid stated that he was acutely aware that the public legitimately expected value for money, but explained that Parish Council's, unlike large organisations, operate with fewer staff and generally get around a table in November to set a budget for the following financial year. Cllr Reid questioned how Parish Council's could be expected to arrange a referendum between budget discussions in November and the precept deadline in January. Cllr Reid affirmed that the policy had not been thought through and he hoped government would reflect upon it as it is difficult enough getting people to stand for local council's without this additional burden.

Cllr Dobson expressed that he found the whole thing unnecessary, given that local councils are already subject to governance and accountability through audit and election. Cllr Dobson stated that the burden is not proportionate to the size of the budget and councils were already over-audited and heavily scrutinised. Cllr Dobson concluded by saying that "this flies in the face of less bureaucracy and more local control, it is totally unnecessary."

Cllr Futers stated that although he supported what Cllr Mrs Burt said in her opening statement, he was taken with what Cllr Dobson expressed. Cllr Futers was concerned that the Government would go one way or the other so it may be wise to choose.

Cllr Mrs Burt stated that she was also taken by what Cllr Dobson had said and was prepared to withdraw her proposal. Cllr Mrs J McGee offered that strict audit and transparency should be taken into account and wondered if the council could combine the proposals into a response to the technical consultation paper. **It was AGREED.**

1617/071 Highfield Lane Traffic Consultation

Cllr McCreedy stated that the waiting times stipulated in the consultation were not long enough as Highfield Middle School pupils do not come out until 3:35pm. Cllr Couchman agreed and added that he had responded to the on-line consultation to that effect. **It was AGREED** to respond on behalf of the council that waiting times should be extended to 3:45pm and to question enforcement of 'parking' on double-yellow lines.

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1617/072 Eastwood Park Play Provision

Cllr Mrs J McGee gave a verbal report of the consultation held at Eastwood park pavilion on 5th September from 3:30-6:30pm. Cllr Mrs J McGee said that as well as herself Cllrs Reid and Price had attended and the meeting was very positive with a lot of on-line responses received beforehand also. Cllr Mrs McGee confirmed that the results of the consultation would be available from 31st October and a further meeting had been scheduled for 8th November at The Spetchells Centre. Cllr Mrs McGee was also pleased to report that Emma Evans (NCC) was confident come December, there would be funding available for Lawn Tennis from Sport England.

1617/073 Events Committee

It was AGREED to receive the report of the meeting held on 6th September.

Cllr Cuthbert said that it was nice to see the runners coming through at her marshal point at the top of Edgewell Road, and that she was pleased to report no issues with cars.

Cllr Dobson echoed that it was a really great event and the events group would hold a review meeting within the next couple of weeks.

Cllr Mrs J McGee thanked all those who helped at the event and was sad she was unable to attend.

1617/074 Transfer of Play Areas

It was AGREED to proceed with the transfer of West Mickley, The Copse and Orchard Hill Play Areas. **It was also AGREED** to withhold the transfer of Castle Dene Play Area until after the issues with play surfacing have been resolved.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs E Burt

Seconded: Cllr Mrs N McGee

1617/075 Reports from Outside Bodies

Northumberland County Council – Cllr Reid expressed that plans to move County hall to the South-East were progressing in that there was a lot of interest in buying the site and finances were secure to carry the plan forward.

Both County Cllr Mrs Burt and Cllr Reid stated that the Tall Ships had been a great success and Cllr Mrs Burt added that it had been a cost neutral event. It was expected that the next tall Ships would be at Sunderland. The Tour of Britain may come back to Northumberland, but whether this will involve Prudhoe remains to be seen.

Cllr McCreedy asked County Cllrs if they had any information regarding Northumberland County Council (NCC) taking over The Fuse Media Centre and whether this would affect the Community Cinema. Cllr Mrs Burt said she did think NCC had taken over but she had no information pertaining to the cinema or any further details.

Prudhoe Community Partnership – Cllr Mrs Burt described that volunteers working on the Prudhoe Hospital Walled Garden were still working on the business plan and as expected Gentoo will not spend any money until a viable plan is available.

Cllr Mrs Burt reported that the 'Live Above a Shop Scheme' was progressing well and the building was going up quickly. The shops were advertised with Pattinsons and so far there were six traders who were interested who they were meeting with soon. Cllr Mrs Burt said tenants of the business premises would be asked to sign a three-year lease and the trustees had a 'wish-list' of what they would like to see on Front Street. Cllr Gill said that was a very short lease for a shop

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and it should be at least five years. Cllr Mrs Burt said she would speak to Pattinsons about a five-year term. Cllr Mrs J McGee asked if PCP would attempt to get shops not already represented on Front Street, Cllr Mrs Burt said that would be the plan.

Prudhoe Pathforce – Cllr Couchman congratulated Prudhoe Pathforce on the Inter-Parish walks leaflet. **It was AGREED** to receive the report of the meeting held on 18th July. Cllr Mrs J McGee asked if thanks could be passed on to Pete Barrett for making sure Cllrs received a copy of the walks leaflet.

Local Town and Parish Council Liaison Group – Cllr Dobson reported that he was unable to attend the meeting held in September. He was expecting to attend the Local Town and Parish Conference on 13th October in the afternoon and if anyone wished to accompany him, there was another space. Cllr Mrs C Cuthbert expressed an interest in attending.

1617/076 Correspondence and Tabled Items

1. Anglo-French Flagpole in Prudhoe: Resident request

Request, dated 28 July, for the Council's comments / suggestions regarding having a flagpole in the town, preferably near the war memorial, where the countries' flags could be flown. The suggestion follows recent tragedies in France and elsewhere.

Suggestion: receive and agree any action to be taken

It was AGREED to receive the letter and consider the proposal at the budgets meeting in November.

2. Go North East: Simplified Fares for Young People, Students & Apprentices – from 24 August 2016

Letter of 3 August from Kevin Carr, Managing Director, launching a number of concessionary offers to those aged 18 or under and those in full-time education of any age (including recognized apprentice schemes). This includes the £1 single fare for all aged 18 and under across the North East Combined Authority Area. A full list of prices is attached.

Website: www.simplygo.com

It was AGREED to receive the item

3. Police & Crime Commissioner for Northumbria: Domestic & Sexual Violence & Abuse – How Your Parish Council can help

Letter of 3 August, asking local parish councils to help make councillors and local communities aware of the work of training workplace domestic violence champions in the Northumbria region. These champions are trained and then offered ongoing support and resources to enable to raise awareness of domestic violence in their workplace, and signpost any colleagues who are experiencing difficulties. The letter also encourages any council members who might be interested in becoming a Rural Domestic Violence Champion. Contact details are provided for any response.

It was AGREED to receive and publicise on the town council website

4. Prudhoe Post Office: 81 Front Street

Letter of 12 August from Post Office Limited, announcing that the proposed relocation to 63/64 Front Street is not now going ahead. The letter can be viewed at

www.postofficeviews.co.uk

It was AGREED to receive the letter with much disappointment.

5. Northumberland County Council: Public Spaces Protection Order for the Control of Dogs

Letter of 24 August, enclosing a proposal to make an as per the title above. This Order is required by statute to replace any existing legislation. The letter states that in Northumberland, the new Order will have "substantially the same effect" as the four dog

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control orders of 2011 it will replace. These orders covered (1) dog fouling (2) exclusion of dogs (3) dogs on leads (4) dogs on leads by direction. Any representations in response to this consultation should be made to the NCC Public Health Protection Unit by 30 September.

It was AGREED to receive the information

6. West Wylam Precinct Area: Resident request

Email of 25 August from resident regarding the fact that the area is being “used as dumping ground for every thing including furniture white goods and litter.” The letter requests that the takeaway shops are made aware that much of the litter “is in the main of their doing” and they are requested to put up notices in their shops reminding the public to use the bin provided, and to clean up when they close. *Note: NCC have been advised of the letter's request in respect of the area being used for fly-tipping.*

It was AGREED to receive the letter and endorse the action already taken

7. Northumberland County Council: Household Waste Recovery Centre (HWRC) Opening Arrangements – Proposal Approved

Letter of 31 August reporting the outcome of the consultation exercise on the proposal to reduce the opening days at the five smallest-volume HWRCs in the county. The letter reports some of the responses to the consultation, and states that the outcome is that, in the light of “the unprecedented financial constraints the Council faces (1) Friday to Monday inclusive opening is being implemented at the five locations previously listed from 4 October (2) to monitor the impacts to the service and incidence of fly-tipping, reporting back to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee after six months of the changes being implemented.

It was AGREED to receive the information

8. Gateshead Council – Draft Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) First Review

Letter of 13 September advising of a public consultation (14 September to 12 October) on the above document. The document describes Gateshead's approach to requesting contributions towards infrastructure from developers. The letter describes the functions of the SPD, and how it may be viewed, including at www.gateshead.gov.uk, at Gateshead Civic Centre, and at Gateshead libraries. Responses may be made by letter or email.

It was AGREED to receive the information

9. It's A Wonderful Life – 70th Anniversary

Letter of 14 September from a documentary maker, regarding a pitch being made to the BBC celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the film, in view of the connection of actor Henry Travers with the town.

It was AGREED to receive and add to the next council agenda

10. Biverfield Road: Resident request

Email of 19 September asking if something can be done about the litter in this area and West Wylam in general. The email states that “the council is doing nothing” and that the road sweeper has not been seen there for a long time. The email states that the grass cutting is appalling, and asks why when “we pay the same council tax as everyone else, why are we not getting the same service?” The resident's concerns have been reported to

It was AGREED to receive the letter and endorse the action already

11. Prudhoe Town Football Club

Letter of 22 September asking for details of the Grant Aid Application process, with a view to application for funding for sets of goals for children ages 7 to 14 years. *Note: a response has been sent indicating that the Football Club will receive details of the grant aid application process when this commences.*

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It was AGREED to receive the letter and to endorse taken to advise of Grant Aid in November

12. Coucillor K Graham: Resignation from the Council

Email of 23 September to the Chairman and the Council office, announcing the resignation with immediate effect of Cllr Graham from the Council.

It was AGREED to receive the resignation and to declare this vacancy at the next council meeting.

13. Land of Oak & Iron – Presentation to the Council

Email of 27 September from the Partnership Manager, offering the Council the opportunity of a short presentation on the work of the project.

It was AGREED to request that Land of Oak and Iron make a Presentation to the October Ordinary Meeting

Tabled Items

1. Society of Local Council Clerks: The Clerk magazine, September 2016
2. Ville de Mitry-Mory: L'Evolution magazine, Septembre 2016
3. Broomley & Stocksfield Parish Council: NE43 News, Issue 60, Autumn 2016
4. Wylam Parish Council: The Wylam Globe, No.122, Autumn 2016
5. Clerks & Councils Direct, Issue 107, September 2016
6. Society of Local Council Clerks: Notice of Annual General Meeting, 14 October 2016
7. National Allotment Society: Allotment & Leisure Gardener, Issue 3 of 2016

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the tabled items

1617/077 Confidential Minutes of Ordinary Meeting, held on 27th July 2016

It was AGREED to receive the minutes as a true record.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs J McGee Seconded: Cllr E Dobson

Cllr Mrs J McGee noted that at the meeting it was AGREED by the council to take part in mediation. Cllr Mrs J McGee asked for a show of hands from those Cllrs prepared to take part. The following Cllrs were prepared to take part in mediation:

Cllr Mrs J McGee
Cllr E Dobson
Cllr A Piper
Cllr A Reid
Cllr D Couchman
Cllr Mrs C Cuthbert
Cllr Ms J Rose
Cllr Mrs E Burt
Cllr Mrs N McGe
Cllr G Price

Cllr Mrs Burt asked for clarification that the administrator had 'personally' asked for her job to be re-graded as in her opinion it was not the job of the clerk to request this. It was confirmed that yes the administrator had asked for an evaluation of her role.

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1617/ 078 Christmas Lights Switch-On Event

It was **AGREED** that the Christmas Lights Switch-On would be held on Friday 25th November as usual.

It was **AGREED** to offer £500 from the 'Events Budget' to a local 'Children in Need' event.

1617/079 Human Resources Committee

a) To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 26th July 2016

This item was not heard as the report had not been agreed as a true record by the committee.

b) To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2016

It was **unanimously AGREED** that the Council's pay policy would be applied in the case of the staff absence notified to the Council, subject to it being confirmed that the Council was legally entitled to act in this way.

Proposed: Cllr E Dobson Seconded: Cllr Mrs E Burt

AGREED