

BILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 6.30PM
HELD IN MEETING ROOM C, BILLINGHAM LIBRARY & CUSTOMER
SERVICE CENTRE

Present: Councillors Atkinson
 Bendelow
 Leckonby
 McCall
 McCoy
 Peebles
 Pollard
 Scollen
 Shotton
 Stoker
 Wallace

Apologies: Councillor Gamble (Business)
 Councillor Sandbach (Personal)

Officials: Miss Dee Smith - Town Clerk/RFO

In the absence of the Chairman, Cllr J Scollen assumed the Chair.

118/21 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced the following:

- Housekeeping;
- There is a vacancy on Billingham South Ward due to Councillor Bentley not attending a meeting for six consecutive months. Stockton on Tees Borough Council (SBC) have been informed and the notice to electors is now being displayed;
- The Town Clerk is in the process of arranging Dementia Friendly training. Councillor training will take place on Tuesday 23rd November at 5.15pm in Billingham Library.

119/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

120/21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TIME

There were no public present or any public questions on this occasion.

121/21 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members were asked to approve the draft minutes from the Full Council meeting held on 29th July 2021 as a true and accurate record.

RESOLVED

That the above minutes, a copy which has previously been circulated to each member, be approved, and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

122/21 YEAR END ACCOUNTS – AUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2020/21

Members were asked to approve the audited AGAR for 2020/21.

The Town Clerk advised members of the following minor issues that were raised by the external auditor.

1. The Council has left Box 11 in section 2 of the AGAR blank. Although the answer that the Council did not have any trust funds could be inferred from answers on the AGAR, the Council should ensure all boxes are filled in, marking nil or not applicable where appropriate.
2. Although the Council provided explanations for all significant variances, the reasons given for unusual income or expenditure in a particular year did not include values so it was not possible to determine if the variance was sufficiently explained from the information submitted for audit. In future, all explanations provided on the variance analysis should be quantified.
- 3.. The Council discussed the budget monitoring reports in detail including reasons for significant variances and the projected outturn, but the minutes were too brief to demonstrate this consideration. In future, the Council should ensure that the minutes fully record the discussion of budget monitoring reports or the reports themselves are expanded to show the forecast outturn and explain significant variances.
4. Cash at box 8, section 2 for 2020/21 was initially £100 overstated due to an addition error aggregating two bank statements.
5. Box 9, section 2 needed reinstating for 2019/20 so that the figure was consistent with the 2020/21 accounting policy.

6. The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and Coronavirus Regulations 2020 required that the 2020 period of public rights covered 30 working days and commenced no later than 1st September 2020. This requirement was not met but the Council has answered yes to the assertion on public rights in the Annual Governance Statement.

Members were advised of the following:

1. In future, Box 11 will not be left blank and will be marked as appropriate.
2. The Town Clerk will ensure that all variances are quantified and broken down to that they can be sufficiently explained.
3. The Town Clerk will ensure that minutes regarding budget monitoring are minuted in detail.
4. This was not our mistake, the figures for the Accounting Statement are produced by Rialtas.
5. The Town Clerk was not aware that the Box 9 figure for 2019/20 needed to be reinstated due to the new policy in place.
6. The Town Clerk will ensure that Annual Governance Statement is completed correctly regarding statutory obligations.

RESOLVED

Members accepted the audited AGAR and approved all of the above.

123/21

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Members were asked to consider the installation of a defibrillator in John Whitehead Park (recommended by the Community Wellbeing Committee – 16th September 2021).

The Town Clerk advised members of the costs involved but also expressed her concerns about anti-social behavior in the park and the risk of damage to the unit. A discussion took place regarding where to locate the defibrillator in the park. It was suggested this could be mounted on the café wall so it could be connected to the café electrics or it could be post mounted and run by battery.

RESOLVED

Members agreed the installation of a defibrillator in John Whitehead Park, to be mounted on the Café wall and connected to the Café electrics (subject to approval from Stockton Borough Council).

Funding for the defibrillator to be sought from local organisations and any shortfall to come from the Health and Wellbeing budget in

Earmarked Reserves. Running costs to be allocated in next year's budget setting process.

124/21 STAFFING MATTERS

The Town Clerk advised members that there are currently two vacancies within the Town Council office: part-time Administration Officer and full-time Business Administration Apprenticeship. The Administration Office vacancy has now closed and interviews will take place week commencing 4th October 2021.

There are also two new members of staff in the café who are settling in well.

Members commented on how proud they were of the Business Support Manager and the opportunities the Town Council gave him.

RESOLVED

Information duly noted.

125/21 TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE LEASE

The Town Clerk advised members that the office lease is almost finalised. Some changes have been made to the draft lease to suit our needs including entry and exit times and days, window and office cleaning and the start date of the lease. All backdated (from Earmarked Reserves and this year's budget rent will be paid as soon as the lease is signed. We will then receive a quarterly invoice for rent payment.

RESOLVED

Information duly noted.

126/21 OFFICE IT

Members were asked to approve spend of £2500 from General Reserves for new office IT equipment for the two new office posts. The Town Clerk advised members that she is now using the Business Support Manager's laptop and her laptop will be given to the Caretaker as he no longer has access to a computer.

RESOLVED

Members agreed the spend of £2500 for new office IT equipment.

127/21 POLICE UPDATE

There was no police update on this occasion.

Members raised concerns about the antisocial behaviour occurring across Billingham, particularly in the Low Grange area.

RESOLVED

To invite the police to the next Full Council meeting in November.

128/21

UPDATE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FOLLOWING EXTERNAL BODIES:

Members received the following updates:

- **Cleveland Local Councils Association**
There was no update on this occasion.
- **Billingham Environment Link Programme**
There was no update on this occasion.
- **Billingham Legacy Foundation**
There was no update on this occasion.
- **Low Grange & Cowpen Residents Association**
There was no update on this occasion.
- **North Billingham Residents Association**
Councillor Leckonby advised that the AGM took place on Monday 20th September followed by the September monthly meeting, attended by 10 residents. The association were extremely pleased with all the work being carried out by the Town Council.
- **Billingham Community Partnership**
The Town Clerk advised that following on from the week long Healthy Household check in June, drop-in sessions are taking place at the Café in the Park with different agencies available every month to speak to.
- **Billingham International Folklore Festival of World Dance**
There was no update on this occasion.
- **Catalyst Health & Wellbeing Committee**
There was no update on this occasion.
- **Port Clarence in Bloom**
The Town Clerk advised that due to the pandemic, the Thirteen Group have not submitted an entry this year however, a plan has been discussed to maintain the planters already in place throughout 2021. Billingham Environmental Link Programme (BELP) have a separate entry with regards to the Clarences in Bloom which involves Clarences Leisure and Garden Association. Over the past 6 years they have won the RHS/Northumbria in Bloom Level 5 award which is the highest award that can be given for an allotment area. This year, BELP are developing a wildlife garden on a derelict area of the allotments and a flower garden

on another part of the site. As part of the allotment garden they are developing a large pond that will be used to attract birds and other wildlife as the garden is adjacent to the Saltholme International Bird Reserve. The Town Council has paid to put the pond in place and plant out the reed beds. We have also paid towards the installation of a mural on the fencing adjacent to the main entry of the allotments to enhance the overall look of the area and, in time, progress this concept along the whole allotment fencing to change the outlook of the whole area.

- **Stockton Volunteers**

The Town Clerk advised that Stockton Community Hub continues to be a key service during the pandemic. Catalyst are currently recruiting volunteers for the new Social Lights scheme, designed to support people in receipt of Adult Social Care. Catalyst are also recruiting School Mentoring Programme volunteers to support children as part of a new partnership project working within 3 schools across Stockton and Guisborough. Stockton on Tees Great Big Green week took place from 18th to 26th September. The Action Asylum Project has been set up looking for volunteering opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to work alongside local people. Finally, Catalyst is working in partnership with Stockton Borough Council, with input from the VCSE sector to develop a new volunteer strategy. On 2nd October, there will be a stall on Stockton High Street where people can learn more about the range of volunteering opportunities around the Borough.

- **The Voice Forum**

There was no update on this occasion.

RESOLVED

Information duly noted.

129/21

STOCKTON HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS & AFFORDABLE WARMTH PARTNERSHIP (HNAW)

Members were asked to consider a representative to attend the above forum.

RESOLVED

To appoint Councillor Jim Scollen onto the forum.

130/21

OCTOBER HALF TERM ENRICHMENT

The Town Clerk advised members that Stockton on Tees Borough Council Public Health Team will be funding a October half-term holiday provision and are looking for providers of holiday activities and nutritious food during the week of 25th October – 29th October 2021.

The Town Council will be submitting an application and activities will include making bird feeders and decorating stones with poppy designs

to mark Remembrance Day. These stones will be laid at the Cenotaph in Billingham.

Members commented on the positive contribution feeding local children has made during the previous half term activities.

RESOLVED

Information duly noted.

To speak to High Clarence school about the Town Council's half term activities (stone decorating) and suggest laying the decorated stones at the war memorial in Port Clarence.

131/21

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

The Town Clerk advised members that the Town Council have partnered with the Royal British Legion Billingham Branch to deliver the Remembrance Sunday parade.

The event will take place on Sunday 14th November with the usual arrangements in place however, there will be a buffet held in the Salutation Public House after the event for up to 100 invited guests.

Councillor Peebles advised members that it is very difficult to raise and lower the flag on the flagpole outside the library due to the mechanism at the top of the pole. He has been in contact with the supplier who are looking into this.

RESOLVED

Information duly noted.

132/21

QUEENS PLATINUM JUBILEE

Members were advised that the Queen's Platinum Jubilee will take place on 2nd June 2022 and the Town Council will be organizing an event to celebrate this occasion, including the purchase of a free-standing beacon. A reserves budget of £8000 has already been agreed.

RESOLVED

Information duly noted.

An agenda item regarding the flagpole to be put on the Planning and Services agenda for updates.

CHRISTMAS 2021

- i. The Town Clerk advised members of the following proposed Christmas events and activities:

- Town Centre Christmas event on Saturday 27th November;
- Christmas carols with Churches Together;
- Annual Town Council Christmas Card competition;
- Afternoon Tea with Santa in the Café in the Park;
- Christmas children's activities (HAF);
- Memory tree in the Café in the Park.

Members were also advised that Stockton Borough Council have agreed again this year to light up the tree in the centre of the park free of charge.

- ii. Members were asked to approve the Town Council office and Café closing on Thursday 23rd December 2021, reopening on Tuesday 4th January 2022.

RESOLVED

- a. Information duly noted.
- b. To approve the Christmas 2021 closing and reopening dates as above.

The meeting concluded at 7.41pm with Cllrs, Atkinson, Bendelow, Leckonby, McCall, McCoy, Peebles, Pollard, Scollen, Shotton, Stoker and Wallace present.



23.11.21