

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, SHOTTON HALL, PETERLEE

ON MONDAY 22nd JANUARY 2024 at 6.30PM

PRESENT: - Cllr A Laing (Chair)

M McCue, S Simpson, R Burnip, R Moore, D Hawley, K Hawley, R Scott, K Duffy, T Duffy,
M A Cartwright, D Howarth & M Sanderson

103. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were offered from Councillors B Fishwick, J Black, J Black, A Stockport, K Liddell & S McDonnell. **RESOLVED Council note the apologies that had been submitted.**

104. Public Participation Session

There were no members of the public present at the meeting. **RESOLVED the information given, be noted.**

105. To receive declarations of interest

Members were reminded of the need to disclose any interests in items on this agenda, whether pecuniary or otherwise. No interests were declared.

106. The Minutes of the last meeting of the 18th December 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting were attached for consideration and approval as a true and correct record. **RESOLVED the minutes be approved and duly signed.**

107. Notes of the Finance Sub Committee of the 18th December 2023

Members confirmed and endorsed the resolution of the Finance Sub Committee to approve BACS payments paid.

108. The Minutes of the Resources Meeting held on Monday 15th January 2024

The notes of this meeting were attached for information. **RESOLVED the minutes be noted.**

109. Review of approach to risk

Members considered a report outlining the Town Council's approach to risk and the updated corporate strategic risk register.

RESOLVED Members note the contents of this report and review and approve the Council's corporate risk assessment and matrix and risk policy.

110. General biodiversity objective

The Town Clerk delivered a presentation outlining the policies, objectives and actions that the Town Council could put in place to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the town, pursuant to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, s.40 & Environment Act 2021, s.102. It was suggested that a learning opportunity could be offered to local colleges for their students to carry out biodiversity/habitat studies on town council land and assets. It was agreed that a 'biodiversity implications' section be included in the 'implications' appendix attached to reports from Council officers.

RESOLVED the information given be noted, and the biodiversity objectives of PTC be considered further in the future once Durham County Council has published its Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other related documents.

111. Setting of the Council Tax precept for 2024/5

Council considered a report of the Town Clerk recommending the Town Council's precept requirement for the 2024/5 financial year.

RESOLVED Council :-

- (i) **Set the 2024/25 precept at 1,773,832.91 which is equivalent to an increase in individual Band A households' council tax of £40.79 for the year or 78 pence per week (equivalent to a 13% increase);**
- (ii) **Agree that the 2023/4 charges for general council services and activities be increased by a target 10% with £500 additional charges for the rugby and cricket grounds maintenance service level agreements;**
- (iii) **Agree that the SLA agreements for the grounds maintenance service for the town's cricket and rugby clubs be reviewed by the Resources Committee and a further report be made to a future Council meeting;**

- (iv) **Ratify the Resources Committee's resolution that the May 2016 '2% resolution' be formally rescinded.**

112. Policies - Resignation Policy

Council considered and reviewed this policy and it was **RESOLVED the policy be accepted and implemented immediately.**

113. Purchase of grass cutting/mulching machinery

Members considered a report from the Town Clerk recommending the purchase of a Ferris FW25 grass cutting/mulching machine at a cost of £5,250 + VAT. **RESOLVED approval be the purchase of a new Ferris FW25 walk behind mower for £5,250 + VAT as set out in the report.**

114. Provision of a new Town Council Web Site

Members considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk/Democratic Services Manager regarding the provision of a new Town Council website following Durham County Council's notice to end their hosting service. **RESOLVED that the Town Council appoints Mitchell Digital to provide a new web site for the Town Council at a one-off build cost of £1,000 with an ongoing monthly fee of £40.00 which would cover hosting, security, maintenance and support.**

115. Potential Music Event, Eden Lane, Friday 27th - Sunday 29th September 2024

Members considered a request from an external events company to host a weekend music event on Town Council land at Eden Lane. The Corporate Services Manager provided details of the completed events application form, and reported the organizer had not yet been in touch with the Peterlee & Horden Rugby Club until the Town Council had considered the request. Members were supportive of the proposal but raised several potential issues including ticket pricing. It was agreed that the Corporate Services Manager clarify these issues and inform the applicant that a decision on whether a fee would be applied for using the land would be considered later. **RESOLVED approval be granted in principle for the use of land at Eden Lane for this proposed event and Members be kept updated on discussions with the organiser.**

116. Exclusion of The Press & Public

RESOLVED that in view of the confidential nature of the items to be discussed, the committee passed the formal resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 & the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, Part 1, due to the commercial and personal information contained in the report.

117. Recruitment of a new Town Clerk

Members were asked to re consider the report recommending the appointment of a recruitment consultant to support the Council in the recruitment of a new Town Clerk following the resignation of the current Town Clerk in December 2023. The matter had been deferred to this meeting by the Resources Committee on 15th January 2024. Following discussion it was **RESOLVED**:-

- (i) The Council's Neighbourhood Services Manager be invited to step up as Acting Chief Officer while a permanent replacement for the Town Clerk was sought.**
- (ii) The Council appoint a locum Clerk for an initial two days per week to provide specific support around democratic and governance matters. The locum would report to the Acting Chief Officer and advise Council on technical governance matters and lead with the process for the council's AGAR submission to the Council's external auditor.**
- (iii) NEREO be appointed to source the locum support and provide the Council with advice and support around the design and delivery of the recruitment process for a permanent Chief Officer/Town Clerk at the prices provided in the report.**
- (iv) Further detail about honoraria and other staffing issues relating to the interim period be provided to the Council in due course.**