

ASPATRIA TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Aspatria Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 16th April 2024 at 6.00p.m at the Methodist Church Hall, Aspatria.

PRESENT: Councillor A Maxwell (Chair)

Councillors: Cllr S Maxwell, Cllr K Thurlow, Cllr A Hankin, Cllr K Smith, Cllr L Hunter, Cllr S Edmondson, Cllr R Gregory, Cllr A Reay, Cllr J Marsh

Also in Attendance: Mrs K Cooper (Town Clerk), Ms S Hullock (RFO)

Minutes

Item		Action
1. Apologies: To receive and accept apologies and note the reasons for absence.	Cllr H Barker – Prior engagement Cllr M Rose – Illness Cllr D McRea – Prior engagement Cllr C Macdonald - Holiday	
2. Mayors Announcements/Updates:	<p>Cllr Maxwell reminded the meeting, and also for the Town Clerk to inform those not present, that the next council meeting in May is the AGM and the Annual Parish Meeting whereby the Chair and Deputy Chair are elected. It is imperative all Councillors attend this meeting if possible.</p> <p>Thanks was given to Cllr Thurlow for his input with the works carried out at Jubilee Walk. The path was closed during the Easter holidays for tarmac to be laid and Cllr Maxwell praised all involved on an excellent result.</p> <p>Thanks was also given to the Town Clerk for arranging the new no entry/exit signs which have been erected at Queen Street car park. The Town Clerk informed the meeting of an email received from Cumberland Council regarding an issue of motorists with no blue badge parking in the incorrect bays. It was suggested the gate and large stones be moved further down the site in order to make room for additional parking bays.</p> <p>The Town Caretaker attended the Bowling Club open day to collect the annual green fees. Cllr Reay expressed his gratitude on the positive work the bowling club carry out maintaining the bowling green. Cllr Maxwell will conduct staff appraisals at the end of April, date to be confirmed. The Town Caretaker will have his appraisal once he has been employed six months.</p>	TC to contact CC
3. Declarations of Interest: Members are invited to make any declarations of Pecuniary Interest or other Registerable Interest (other than those recorded on their Notification of Pecuniary	None	

Interests or other Registerable Interests) relating to any items on the agenda.		
4. Minutes of Aspatria Town Council Meeting held 19th March 2024 :	The minutes were agreed to be of a true record of the last meeting. Approved	
5. Clerks Report:	<p>The Town Clerk had received an email from the solicitors on behalf of the owner of the allotment land at Lawson Street. This has been ongoing since 2022, however due to discrepancies within the lease, it was agreed the Clerk contact the owner to discuss matters further.</p> <p>The fire extinguisher in the Caretakers shed requires a service, the RFO informed the meeting of an annual payment to Orian for this. Town Clerk to contact Orian. Town Caretaker to investigate the amount of fire extinguishers and the location of them within the changing rooms.</p> <p>A bin has been requested for Lawson Street allotments, awaiting on a reply.</p> <p>Contact has been made in regards to powering new Christmas lights, awaiting on a reply.</p> <p>Christmas lights which were hanging loose have been reported to the contractor to be reinstalled to the house. Resolved.</p>	TC JB
6. Public Participation:	Cllr Marsh made a suggestion to approach our allotment holders to increase the number of hanging baskets which are displayed throughout the town. Cllr Reay advised very few allotment holders grow flowers on their plots. The baskets were reduced from 40 to 20 due to costs of having these watered, as previously the watering was not done correctly and many of the flowers died. It was agreed to review this next year with a possible increase of 10 additional baskets.	
7. Confidential Items:	None	
8. Highways:	Cllr Thurlow informed the Clerk via email of a road closure for resurfacing works at B5301 Arkleby, near Aspatria, which is to commence on 22 nd April and is anticipated to take 12 days to complete.	
9. To receive for information, reports on issues relevant to the Town from County, District and Independent Councillors: 9.1 Councillor Kevin Thurlow	Cllr Edmondson asked the Council to investigate freeports, special economic zones (SEZ) and food economic zones (FEZ) for Councillors opinions at the next meeting with implications it may mean for Aspatria.	
10. Financial Matters:	<p>i) Expenditure and Income Schedule for March 2024:- RESOLVED that the expenditure of £5,189.49 and income of £4,029.36 be approved.</p> <p>Members also approved the additional invoices for payment:-</p>	

	<p>Aspatria Farmers - £212.18 - Various Tools and Materials Npower - £68.37 Electricity for Brandraw Toilets 1.3.24 - 31.3.24 Aquatrust - £144.00 - Legionella Monitoring Programme Cumbria Pest Services - £145.20 - Allotment Rodent Control Contract April to June 24 LR & JA Allen - £163.47 - Van Fuel Brayton Services - £180.47 - Small Service and Repairs</p> <p>(ii) To receive the Bank Reconciliation Statements as at 31st March 2024: - RESOLVED that the circulated Bank Reconciliation Statements be confirmed and accepted as a true record for the end of the 23/24 financial year.</p> <p>(iii) Quarter 4, 2023/24, Budget Monitoring Report:- The RFO explained that the monitoring report enables a review of the Council's actual spending and income in comparison to that which was budgeted for within various approved headings. This monitoring highlights any potential areas of concern allowing for corrective action to be taken. The report presented was the last monitoring report for the 2023/2024 financial year and covers April 2023 to March 2024. Throughout the year, the Council have already discussed the variances which have been highlighted in this report, and agreed virements and transfers in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations. In addition, since the financial implications of decisions taken by the Council are discussed at meetings prior to being approved, Councillors are aware of instances when they have approved the use of balances or additional funding received, which is not ring fenced. The RFO gave an overview of the net position at the end of the year explaining that the Council had made a surplus of £11,895.16 as a contribution to balances. It was also explained that these figures would form part of the year end return which is subject to both internal and external audit. RESOLVED that the budget monitoring report for the final quarter to March 2024 be accepted and approved with Councillors agreeing the virements/transfers made within the report.</p> <p>(iv) Movement in Cash Reserves:- The RFO explained to Councillors how the Council were using their bank balances to support annual spending levels on a regular basis. This has been raised on numerous occasions and it was agreed that during the 2023/24 financial year, a temporary freeze be placed on grant assistance offered. This, coupled with savings made from staff changes and a reduction in initiatives undertaken, has resulted in a surplus made at the end of the 2023/24 financial year. The RFO continued to state that it may be beneficial to</p>	
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	<p> earmark this surplus as a reserve to cover future building, asset and equipment repairs, enhancements and replacements given that:-</p> <p>(i) 2024/25 is the final year the Council will receive a contribution from Cumberland Council towards the Brandraw Toilet Block, (as part of the asset transfer agreement), meaning that all future costs must be fully funded by the Town Council;</p> <p>(ii) the Council needs to review the playground equipment following the inspection report; and</p> <p>(iii) the Caretaker's van will eventually need to be replaced</p> <p>RESOLVED that the movement in cash reserve figures be accepted. The Council have agreed to transfer £10,000 of this into an earmarked reserve specifically for Building, Asset and Equipment Repairs, Enhancements and Replacements. The Councillor acknowledged that this reserve can only be used for the purpose intended and any deviation from this must be approved at full Council.</p> <p>(v) Asset register as at 31.03.24</p> <p>The RFO explained that the net increase of the Council assets during 2023/24 amounted to £568.60. This was due to the purchase of one bench/seat and plaque, the purchase of mining plaques and recognition in the register of the brea lamp, for a nominal amount.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the circulated Asset Register be confirmed and accepted as a true record for the end of the 23/24 financial year. It was noted that the value of the Council's assets as of 31st March 2024 is £407,418.22. This will be reported in the year end accounting statement.</p> <p>(vi) To receive the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations:-</p> <p>The RFO explained that these were previously approved late, at the November 2023 meeting, and it is felt that these should be re-approved for the coming financial year, noting that there had been no changes to these documents.</p> <p>The RFO reminded the Councillors of the need to maintain accurate and up to date Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The RFO summarised that Standing Orders are the written rules of the Council. They are essential to regulate the proceedings of a meeting. It was explained that the Council may also use standing orders to confirm or refer to various internal organisational and administrative arrangements. The Standing Orders of the Council are not the same as the policies of a Council, but Standing Orders may refer to them. The RFO further summarised that the Financial Regulations are standing orders to regulate and control the financial affairs and accounting procedures of the Council. It was explained that the Council is responsible, in law,</p>	
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	<p>for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that the Council has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions, including arrangements for the management of risk. RESOLVED that the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, as presented, are confirmed as being accurate and timely and are accepted and approved.</p> <p>(vii) Brandraw Toilets Water Rates The RFO explained that following emails and submission of information to prove the Council now owned the Brandraw Toilet Block, we had received our first water rates bill for the period 1st June 2022 to 14th March 2024. This amounted to £1,199.64. This was promptly paid, following approval, given the delay in invoicing. RESOLVED The RFO will submit monthly meter readings online to ensure bills are kept up to date for monitoring purposes.</p> <p>(viii) Electricity bill for changing rooms Following the online submission of the electricity meter reading for March 2024, a monthly bill of £362.44 was generated. This was triple the usual monthly bills. The RFO discussed this with the Chair and Caretaker and following a check of the meter, it was confirmed that the readings supplied were correct. It was highlighted however, that the changing room heaters had been left running on a couple of occasions. The RFO confirmed that she had not recently received any income from football teams for the use of the changing rooms. RESOLVED that a meeting be held with the coaches of the football teams to explain what has happened with regards to the heaters and the condition/cleanliness of the changing rooms after use. Rules and regulations governing the use, and payment for the use, of the changing rooms are to be reiterated. It is understood that the heaters have now been disabled.</p> <p>(vix) Allotment Payments The RFO explained that £70.00 BACs income had been received in April 2024. The description was simply 'Internal Transfer' as the payer must also bank with the Cumberland. No other reference was given and the RFO wondered whether this income was in relation to an Allotment on Lawson Street. The RFO requested an update for those plots where payment still remains outstanding. RESOLVED Cheques received for outstanding allotment plots were handed to the RFO for banking. A review of the registers highlighted one outstanding payment, (with the exception of the empty plots), and the RFO has queried whether this relates</p>	
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	The Clerk provided two quotes for the replacement of the motors for the shutter roller door at the Caretakers compound. The Councillors decided the Clerk acquire an extra quote and look at this at the next meeting. Ongoing. A new toilet seat is required for the toilet in the changing rooms, Town Clerk to arrange.	TC TC
14. Schedule of Correspondence, Notices and Publications: To receive a schedule of correspondence, notices and publications received since the last meeting.		
15. Applications for Development:	None to be discussed.	
16. Items submitted by members:	None	
17. Items for the next meeting:	Grant form – St Kentigerns Church Freeports/SEZ/FEZ Footpath from College Close to Chapel Shutter door motor	
18. The next meeting of Aspatria Town Council will take place on Tuesday 21st May 2024 at 6pm.		

The meeting ended at 8.05pm

