

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF STANLEY TOWN COUNCIL
 Held at Stanley Civic Hall, Front Street, Stanley on Tuesday 17th May 2016 at 6.30pm

PRESENT: J Nicholson* A Clegg G Graham C Thompson
 W Nixon R Harrison D Tully D Marshall
 D Mills R Ferris L Marshall M Wilkinson
 C Bell D Walker B Nair J Charlton

*Chairman

OFFICERS: Alan Shaw (Town Clerk)
 Nicola James (PA to the Town Clerk)
 James Harper (Community Development Manager)

IN ATTENDANCE: 5 members of the Public

1 WELCOME ADDRESS FROM THE CHAIR OF STANLEY TOWN COUNCIL

The Chair, Cllr J Nicholson, welcomed everyone to the Town Meeting for an insight into what Stanley Town Council did in 2015-16.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from STC Cllr L Elliott and DCC Cllrs Marshall, Nearney, Hodgson and Davinson.

3 MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 19 MAY 2015

It was proposed by Cllr B Nixon, seconded by Cllr R Harrison and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting on 19th May 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN

The Chair noted that it has been a privilege to be Chair of STC for 2015-16. She has had the pleasure of working with and meeting many members of the public. Our new Town Clerk has been very understanding since joining the Town Council in July 2015 and he is a privilege to work with. She also thanked the staff for their hard work through recent difficult times. Cllr Nicholson advised that the TC has worked with many outside agencies, i.e the mini police, which she was more than happy to support. We have worked with SHAID, the mens cee, PACT House and many more. She was pleased that the TC could fund the Durham Money Advice Service further as this is a service that Stanley needs.

5 REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF SERVICE COMMITTEES

Crime & Community Safety - Cllr Christine Bell

The Crime and Community Safety Committee is the main vehicle for working with other partners like Police and the Fire Brigade on joint initiatives in Stanley. The Committee delivers agreed initiatives to budgets established by Council and explores ways in which the Council can make interventions which will have an impact on our

communities at large. The Committee leads on environmental issues and has responsibility for monitoring the delivery of the Environmental Enhancements Contract (currently with Groundwork North East).

The Crime & Community Safety Committee has had a busy year and has delivered a number of new initiatives as well as repeating some from previous years. Some of the highlights include:

Mini Police

The Town Council has supported the Durham Constabulary Mini Police by funding the project at four schools in the Parish. 80 children from Greenlands, Catchgate, East Stanley & South Stanley Primary Schools were issued with uniforms and will get involved with helping local police during events and represent their school and the town. The initiative had been tried in Durham and Weardale and was shown to be an excellent way to engage young people with both their local police but also make them feel more engaged and empowered in the wider community. The initiative was launched with a Parade from Stanley Police Station up the Front Street to the Civic Hall, where the children were met by the Lord Lieutenant of County Durham and the Chairmen of the County and Town Councils and Police and Crime Commissioner Ron Hogg. The Town Council hopes to expand the initiative in the coming year.

The Word

Working with young people from Tanfield School, North Durham Academy and some year 6 students from a local Primary School, The Word was an initiative about working with young people to explore community issues through writing and performing hip hop and rap. The project culminated with a performance in the Civic Hall, in which the participants learnt about lighting, sound and stage craft.

Blooming Good Fun

The Town Council's Blooming Good Fun Competition returned for its second year in 2015. The competition attracted twice as many entries as in the first year and helped to support the Town's entry in Northumbria in Bloom. The outstanding entrants were invited to an awards event held at the Civic Hall and prizes given. The event will be run again in 2016.

Police Cars

The Town Council continues to support the local community policing teams by providing them with two additional vehicles (one based at Catchgate and one at South Moor) to help them Police the area more effectively.

PACT House

In September, the Town Council was approached by Police because the Youth Cafe was about to become homeless due to the imminent closure of the Tommy Armstrong Centre. At the same time, the former Lloyds Bank building in the Front Street was available. The Town Council agreed to step in to help secure the lease and the building is being converted to a community resource that will be a youth cafe, Men's Cree, training facility for SHAID, a venue for community and support groups to meet and hopefully in the future the base for Community Radio and other projects.

Other Initiatives

The Committee participated in a number of small initiatives. The Council continues to provide free dog waste bags at a number of locations around the Parish. The Committee campaigned for and successfully got bollards placed on the side roads of Front Street to prevent parking on the pedestrianised area. With Police, The Council

launched a 'Pink Poo' campaign, encouraging people to identify dog fouling by spraying the area. Highlighting dog fouling in this way has been shown to discourage people from leaving dog fouling behind.

Communications & Events - Cllr David Mills

The Communications & Events committee's role is to oversee how the Council engages with the community. We now have a new website that the public can subscribe to, and we manage our social media pages more effectively. There has been an increase in views and likes of our latest posts. The Town Council newsletter, Stanley Life, is now on its second issue and will be delivered to every house with a DH9 post code. This is an invaluable tool to get information to the public. We carried out a consultation with the public that was very open, which included drop in sessions and at local community events and we engaged teenagers at NDA and Tanfield School. The Town Council are now working on a plan to address the need and wants of the public. The Town Council are constantly reviewing and developing events and are looking for new ideas for all ages and to make them free where possible. The Committee has revitalised the Christmas decorations to make them more uniform.

in 2015-16 the Committee funded over 80 events, which included Moria Con, a 2 week Festival of Music, Tea in the Park, Stanley Fringe and Alice in the Park. There are 13 more play days being organised for 2016-17 as a result of the success of Alice in the Park.

We also held an awards evening which highlighted the achievements of a range of people from Gold Medal Football winners to a fairy village creator.

Planning - Cllr Billy Nixon

The Planning Committee fulfils the Town Council's function as a statutory consultee for planning matters and considers planning matters which it feels will have a significant impact on the Parish and makes recommendations to the County Council. Last year was quiet in terms of large scale development proposals in the area, with the Town Council only really taking a view on developments at Stanfield House, The old Board School, the redevelopment of the Hibernian club and a few others. The big story in terms of Planning last year was the Council's decision to apply for designation as a Neighbourhood Planning Area which was granted in April 2016 and it will be the Planning Committee which will take the lead for the delivery of any Neighbourhood plan.

Why does this matter?

The current planning policies that apply in Stanley are the ones drawn up by Derwentside District Council in 1998. They are outdated and have been superseded by national policies that make it easy for developers and more difficult for local communities to decide what kind of the development they want in their area.

What about the County Council?

The County Council has not implemented a County-wide plan since it took responsibility for town planning in 2009.

Being designated as a Neighbourhood Planning Area means that the Town Council has the opportunity to make it's own plan that can reflect the needs and aspirations of our communities without needing to try and balance the needs of the County as a whole. We are able to fight for Stanley and be parochial because that's our job. The County Council can't do that in the same way.

Personnel - Cllr Ron Harrison

The Personnel Committee fulfils the Council's responsibilities as an employer. It reviews policies and procedures in place for managing staff and makes recommendations to Council about matters relating to staffing, health and safety and recruitment. In the last year, the Committee oversaw the appointment of a new Town Clerk in July 2015 and an Events Manager in the Civic Hall in January 2016.

In 2015-16, the Personnel Committee has reviewed and updated a number of core matters and policies that affect staff:

Staff Contracts, (New revised contracts issued to all staff); Staff Appraisals Scheme; Sickness Absence Management Policy updated;

Special Leave Policy implemented;

Flexi-time and flexible working reviewed;

Building security reviewed (Civic Hall)

6 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2015/16

The Finance Committee has responsibility for ensuring that the Council meets its legal requirements in respect of the keeping of proper accounts, for monitoring payments made by the Council to ensure they are lawful, in accordance with the Financial Regulations and consistent with decisions of the Council. The Committee also assists with preparation of the Annual Budget, reviews expenditure to ensure value for money is being achieved and monitors performance of the Council's service provision and the Civic Hall. It also has oversight of the audit process and formulates plans to deal with any issues identified by the auditor.

The Final accounts show that the overall budget for the Town Council was underspent by £53,000 in 2015-16. The main reason for this being that the budget set in January included an enhanced services contract for wardens and environmental caretakers which was due for renewal and the Council when reviewing the performance of the contract chose not to renew it. This left around £100,000 in the budget that was unallocated. £45,000 was awarded as a grant to the Greening Twizell Burn project and the rest unspent. Council took the decision last month to use £30,000 of the underspend to fund money advice services in Stanley for the coming year, whilst the remainder is being recommended to be kept aside in an earmarked reserve to cover election costs in 2017.

Overall, the Financial performance of the Council has been as was projected. There are overspends in some areas but these are offset by underspending in others. The internal and external auditors have not identified any major concerns with the management of the Council's finances and have certified that sound risk management and governance is in place.

However, the Council is determined to provide value for money and ensure there is transparency in the way it conducts its finances. In the last year, a new finance software package was obtained which allows us to publish much more detailed financial information on a monthly basis which is accessible by the public. We have published an Annual Report to inform residents how we arrive at our budgets and what we spend them on.

7 OPEN FORUM

The Town Clerk advised that the meeting was now open to the public to ask any questions relating to matters of interest specific to the town of Stanley.

Mr Stalker asked:

How can Derwentside Homes erect a structure outside my home which devalues my house by £5,000? I'm talking about the crib wall at Humber Hill.

Ms Stalker said:

When the crib wall was built, we were told it would be a grassy hill, but instead it is a concrete monstrosity.

The Town Clerk noted that this wasn't something that could be answered at the meeting but he would be happy to look into the matter further if Mr and Ms Stalker wished.

Ms Stalker asked:

Will DCC build garages at Arnold Close where the garages were knocked down?

The Town Clerk noted that if there is a planning application for the Council to comment on then a planning meeting can be called to discuss the application.

Mr K Reay asked:

Why is the cost of the pantomime tickets £14 when it was agreed that they would be £10 when funding was given to the Civic Hall to host their own pantomime?

The Town Clerk noted that this has already been brought to his attention by Cllr David Mills and that it would be looked at in the next meeting.

8

CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting was closed by the Chair.