

MINUTES of the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF STANLEY TOWN COUNCIL
Held at Stanley Civic Hall, Front Street, Stanley on Tuesday 14th March 2017 at 6.30pm

PRESENT: J Nicholson* A Clegg G Graham C Thompson
W Nixon R Harrison D Tully D Marshall
D Mills L Marshall M Wilkinson D Walker
L Elliott

*Chairman

OFFICERS: Alan Shaw (Town Clerk)
Nicola James (PA to the Town Clerk)
James Harper (Community Development Manager)
Lee Brannigan (Civic Hall Events Manager)

IN ATTENDANCE: 24 Members of the Public, Carole Hampson, Frank McGough, Kevin Howe & Alan Shield

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 2016-17. She was pleased to see so many public in attendance. Thanks were given to Councillors who have worked hard in their Wards this year, Staff in the Civic Hall and behind the scenes Town Council staff.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors J Charlton, D McMahon & C Bell.

3 MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 17 MAY 2016

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting on 17th May 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman noted that she was privileged to have worked with and supported the mini police, which has grown and been implemented country wide. She praised the work of the Durham Money Advice and North Road Gym boxing club, which she was particularly proud to be able to give back to her local town centre. It has been a privilege to support PACT House which is going from strength to strength. She advised that the Council has worked on many Community Safety and Road Safety initiatives and that she was privileged to be Chair of Stanley Town Council for 2016-17.

5 PRESENTATION FROM PARTNERS

(i) Durham Money Advice - Alan Shield

Alan Shield informed everyone about the service that DMA provides. He explained that the project original started in June 2015, and it was expected to see 50 full time clients in a year. That target was a little unrealistic, at the end of that 12 months, the number of full time clients was 199, nearly 4 times the target. Sometimes clients are seen on a

repeated basis. Within 12 months, there were 437 clients who revisited on a frequent basis. From June 2016 - March 2017 there were 203 new clients. Last year was a challenging time for the people who need the DMA service. DMA had 1 advisor working 30 hours per week, and an admin officer who worked 16 hours per week. That could not be sustained as the quality of service expected could not be given. So the arrangement was changed so that there are 2 advisors in The Venue, 1 working 20 hours per week and the other working 26 hours per week. This means someone is always available to help drop ins. DMA now works with Community Money Advice, Stanley now works as a separate entity and is called County Durham Money Advice Centre Stanley. Total debt managed June 2016 - March 2017 is £886,000. This service has been well received and compliments services provided by Citizens Advice.

(ii) PACT House - Kevin Howe

Kevin informed everyone about what PACT House has been doing in the last year. PACT House is about community wellbeing, it is fully inclusive, it is about joined up services, it is a place where we can all care and share, and people can grow and explore other opportunities. In 2016 PACT House didn't know which way it was going. Kevin pulled together a business plan which looked at what could be achieved. PACT House have; implemented IT access for local residents who do not have their own, provided employment skills and development opportunities, helped young people get apprenticeships, held events, held community gatherings, provided community meals, provided external catering services, holding mens and womens cree services. In 2016 PACT House has come a long way. PACT House has support from the following delivery partners - Stanley Town Council, Durham County Council, SHAID, Just for Women, Durham Constabulary and many more. Groups that meet in PACT House include - LGBT, mini Rotary club, ROAD, church groups, probation services, stray aid, Alzheimer's society, and many more. Kevin finally outlined the income and expenditure and explained where grants for PACT House came from.

(iii) North Road Gym - Frank McGough

Frank McGough introduced himself and North Road Gym. North Road Gym was the Booker Club when it was started off by the McCrory, before it was taken over 7 years ago it was taken over and renamed North Road Gym. It is located behind the Buffs Club in Catchgate, and when the club closed, Stanley Town Council provided a grant to support North Road Gym to purchase the club. The Gym has around 40 juniors, 10 seniors, plus 7 coaches and 3 or 4 helpers. Since Christmas there has been an increase in juniors who attend the Gym, so much so, the Gym may have to consider opening an extra night. The Gym has 7 coaches, plus another 4 who will be joining soon which will enable the Gym to open more nights and take more kids. The Gym has 10 or 12 girl boxers, one of which, Gaynor French, won the ABA Championships, which Frank and the Gym are very proud of. Frank finished off by thanking the Town Council for their financial support.

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REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF SERVICE COMMITTEES

(i) Crime and Community Safety Committee

As the Chairman of the Crime and Community Safety Committee was absent from the meeting, the Town Clerk gave an update report on the work of the Committee.

The Town Council carried out a survey of residents at the start of 2016, to ask what kind of services and initiatives we should look to focus our resources on. Things which came back strongly were community provision, ways to tackle anti-social behaviour, provision for youth and regeneration.

We have already heard from three organisations that the Town Council has supported with significant financial contributions this year whose objectives are aimed squarely at addressing this need. The PACT House has touched a number of them. It has regenerated an old building in the heart of the Town which was falling away into disrepair. It has become a focal point for community outreach, education and training, youth provision and it is a community centre.

In the coming year the Town Council has agreed to fund a detached youth project which will go to the places where young people congregate, work with them and both address their needs and as a result, hopefully address the complaints of anti-social behaviour from other residents. There is a significant overlap between this work and other work which has been supported financially by the Town Council, like youth cafes in Annfield Plain and Stanley and PACT House.

It is unfortunate that there is a need for the Council to fund a money advice service but we recognise that these are difficult times for many residents and that a service which can support them to manage any financial problems they are experiencing is sadly an essential service that the principal authority itself can no longer afford to prioritise.

Being able to secure the future of North Road gym is another intervention that the Council is happy to have made. North Road gym has been providing mentoring and support as well as a leisure activity to young people in Catchgate for many years and had the Town Council not stepped in, we may have lost the club to Consett or elsewhere and the offer to young people in the area would have been worse for it.

In 2016 the Council held its third 'Blooming Good Fun Awards', a project which appears to be and is a fun gardening competition but has the underlying aim of raising Civic Pride and incrementally both improving the environment of our town both by the contributions of our gardeners and the examples they set in their local areas.

The Council's Environmental Improvements project has continued to identify problem areas that are not picked up by the County Council's maintenance regimes and projects identified around the parish by ward members. The team have added hundreds of hours of litter picking, fly tip removal and maintenance of footpaths and bridleways across the Stanley area to the service provided by the County Council in addition to projects ranging from building fencing, putting out and providing planters, refurbishing and placing park benches, and maintaining cemeteries. The team also provide the Town Council's contribution to winter maintenance, gritting footpaths in key areas and maintaining the dozen new grit bins the Council has put out to add to those already provided.

We have put aside funding to support Durham Police's Community Road Safety scheme, which as well as carrying out regular community speed watch events around the parish and beyond, engages with young people and schools to educate them about the dangers of drink driving, texting whilst driving and more. We are also investing in community defibrillators, which could save lives locally and we continue to fund additional patrol cars for our community policing teams to enable them to work more flexibly and cover more ground than their counterparts elsewhere in North Durham.

All in all, a busy year where we have sought to listen to the views of residents and both fund and deliver projects which will address those issues.

(ii) Communication and Events Committee

Councillor David Mills, the Chairman of the Communications and Events Committee provided an update report on the work of the Committee.

It has been a busy year for the Committee. In the last year we have organised and delivered more events for residents than any other year since the Council started. In June, we organised Stanley's first Armed Forces Day event on Front Street and created a carnival atmosphere. We are already planning the event for 2017 and it promises to be even better. We put on a live Brass music event in Front Street as part of the Durham Brass Festival and paid for musicians to visit local schools and work with the children. We put on a community cycle ride along the C2C route. We repeated our 'Tea in the Park' event, combining classical music, tea and cake and deck chairs to create a memorable day out in Annfield Plain Park. The Council continued its financial support for the North East Horticultural Show, Moria Con - North Durham's only geek convention, and through the Stanley Fringe Simon Green hosted 'This is Stanley', a celebration of Stanley in both film and photography that captured the imagination of everyone who saw it.

In the summer holidays, we launched our Play in the Park events at parks right across the parish, with the simple premise that we wanted to provide free or low cost activity days for families throughout the summer that they could walk to from their homes. Despite the odd organisational hiccup along the way, these events were an unqualified success. Attendances grew and grew as awareness spread and thousands of local people enjoyed a cheap fun day out. We will be repeating Play in the Park in 2017 and hope to build on the success of last year. In addition to organising our own fun days, we also provided a grant of £1,000 towards the provision of both the Craghead Family Fun Days and the Tanfield Lea days over the summer enabling those groups to put on better events and to keep more of the funds raised towards their own community centres.

We continue to provide Christmas lights across the parish and added more fairy lights to the trees near the Louisa Centre to add to those provided outside the Civic Hall in 2015. For the first time, we put on a Christmas Market and funfair in the Front Street as part of our Christmas lights celebration event which was really well supported and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who came along. We hope to build on this concept in 2017 and make it bigger and better.

The Council has allocated funds to provide a community radio station, to be provided at PACT House, to provide a local platform for people to learn and develop media skills, to share information and hopefully to create another community resource to promote Stanley both to residents and beyond.

We also continue to support memorial events by organising the South Moor event ourselves, providing a ceremony on 11th November at our premises and providing resources for Craghead and Annfield Plain's events. Aside from war remembrance events, we also participate in the organisation and delivery of the annual memorial for the West Stanley Disaster.

The Civic Hall staged Aladdin, our first in-house pantomime production in December 2016 which was a great success and the team are already planning Snow White for

2017. The advance sales are excellent. The Council opened a Coffee Shop in the Civic which has helped to keep the hall busy even during the days when there aren't any shows or bookings, however those days are fewer than ever as we have more corporate and training bookings than ever and shows almost every week of the year. We continue our incremental refurbishment of the Civic Hall and are proud that by saving the Hall in 2013 we have been able to safeguard a cultural asset for the residents of the town that would almost certainly if it had been lost, never replaced. In 2017 we are planning to create our own in-house company, the Alun Armstrong players, to use the theatre and facilities to their fullest potential and to stage two further full-cast dramatic productions a year to further enhance our programme. The Civic also hosted our very successful Chairman's Awards night, an event designed to enable the Council to recognise and pay tribute to people all around Stanley who have made a real difference to the lives of others and enhanced the area through their community service. These will return in the next Civic year.

On the Communications side, we continue to attempt to be innovative in the way we engage local residents. We are active in social media and have built a solid following through our Facebook page which helps us reach and inform residents about local events, news and items of interest. We have been trialling broadcasting our meetings live to try and further spread the word about what the Council does, how it conducts business and how people can get involved and we remain committed to communicating to every household by regularly distributing printed media in the form of local magazines and what's on guides.

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REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK

The Town Clerk outlined other initiatives that the Town Council had been involved in over the last year.

In addition to the activities outlined above, the Council has been actively seeking to transfer from Durham County Council further assets to enhance the area and the communities we serve. We have applied for and been granted the lease of the Annfield Plain Community Room in West Road, which was under threat of closure as the lease had been surrendered to the County Council and we intend to safeguard and enhance this community asset.

More significantly, in partnership with local charities SHAID and the Just for Women Centre, we have created a bid for the old Council offices in Front Street which will see that building protected, restored and brought back into use for its original purpose as a Town Hall, a service centre for our third sector providers and create a heritage and cultural asset in the heart of the town. A refurbished, restored and vibrant Town Hall will provide a real incentive to drive further regeneration of the Town Centre and will give residents a focal point for Civic pride in the Town.

The Council has a War Memorial steering group which is at present exploring the possibility of providing a central war memorial for the whole of Stanley Parish. Whilst we have some fine memorials around the area, notably at Annfield Plain, Craghead and in St Andrews and other churchyards, there is no memorial which represents all the

people across the area lost or injured in all conflicts. The Council has set aside a budget for such a memorial and will be consulting residents about this matter in 2017.

The Clerk also noted that a new Full Council Grants budget has been established for 2017/18.

8 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2016/2017

The Town Clerk reported the expected financial position of the Council at the year end. He advised that our expected expenditure will be just under £1,000,000. 1/4 of that is on the Civic Hall, 13% on grants, 2% on PACT House, 1% on democracy, 4% on administration. We also receive income from the precept, a grant from DCC and the Civic Hall.

9 OPEN FORUM

Questions from the floor:

Frank McGough asked if STC move into the Front Street offices, what would happen with the Civic Hall? The Town Clerk noted that the Civic Hall would just continue as it is and the Town Council staff would move out of the changing rooms office in the Civic Hall and into the Front Street offices.

Kevin Howe requested that the Town Council work together with Aldi to prevent shopping trolleys being stolen and left in the cycle ways and woods. It could be suggested that the trolleys be limited to where they can be taken with a locking system if they are taken from Aldi.

Ken Rollings asked where the DCC offices are now they have moved out of the Front Street offices. The Town Clerk advised that the Customer Access point is in the building behind the Civic Hall, in the Louisa Centre.

Kevin Howe noted that there is a huge consultation around housing across whole of the County. He was particularly interested in the merger of all the housing providers, although nothing will change in 12 months there are no guarantees in what will happen with rent in the future. Kevin is in fear that rents will go up in Stanley as part of the bigger programme with new housing provider, will STC have input with consultation and raise these concerns?

The Chairman agreed that the Town Clerk can make sure that the Council look at this.

10 CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting was closed by the Chair and light refreshments were made available.