



STANLEY TOWN COUNCIL

NOTICE OF MEETING

I hereby give notice that an Ordinary meeting of the Stanley Town Council will be held on Tuesday, the 15th December 2015 at 6.30pm at Stanley Civic Hall, Front Street, Stanley, Co. Durham, DH9 0NA.

TO ALL MEMBERS of STANLEY TOWN COUNCIL

J. Nicholson (Chair)	A. Clegg	G. Graham	C. McKee	C. Thompson
W. Nixon (Vice-Chair)	T. Davinson	R. Harrison	D. McMahan	D. Tully
C. Bell	L. Elliott	D. Marshall	D. Mills	D. Walker
J. Charlton	R. Ferris	L. Marshall	B. Nair	M. Wilkinson

You are hereby summoned to attend an **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **Stanley Town Council** to be held in **Stanley Civic Hall, Front Street, Stanley**, on **Tuesday the 15th December 2015 at 18.30** in order to transact the following business:

Yours sincerely,

Alan Shaw
Town Clerk
9th December 2015

Please turn off all mobile phones or set to silent mode
Please refer to the Policy for recording proceedings

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To **RECEIVE** any apologies and reasons for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are invited to **DECLARE** disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests, along with the nature of those interests, in relation to any item on this agenda.

3 PROCEDURAL AND APPROPRIATE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

To **RECEIVE** announcements from the Chair or Town Clerk.

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

An adjournment will be allowed at the direction of the Chairman to allow for public comment and response in relation to items on this agenda or to consider written questions from the public submitted in advance of the meeting (*Individuals will be permitted a maximum of three minutes each. Total time for this session is limited to fifteen minutes*).

5 CONFIRMATION OF COUNCIL MINUTES (ATTACHMENT A)

To **APPROVE** as a correct record and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 24th November 2015.

6 MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

To receive the Minutes of the following Committee Meetings:

1st December 2015	Personnel	(ATTACHMENT B)
8th December 2015	Comms & Events	(ATTACHMENT C)
9th November 2015	Finance & Gen. Purposes	(ATTACHMENT D)

7 BANKING ARRANGEMENTS (ATTACHMENT E)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s. 150

A report from the Finance Manager is attached relating to authorised signatories and methods of payment of accounts.

Council is requested to **CONSIDER** the report and **DECIDE** what to do.

8 REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK (ATTACHMENT F)

A report from the Town Clerk on current activities and matters of interest to the Council is attached. Members are requested to **NOTE** the report and may ask the Town Clerk for further updates at the meeting.

9 DRAFT BUDGET 2016/17 (ATTACHMENTS G & H)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Finance Act 1992, s.50

The Council has a duty to calculate it’s budget for the forthcoming year so that it can submit a precept demand to Durham County Council in January for the year 2016/17. Over the past two months, members have been asked to consider the projects and initiatives they would like the Town Council to deliver in 2016/17. A draft budget has been prepared taking into account the stated wishes of Council and the operational costs and overheads required to run the Council’s administration and services.

Members of the Finance & General Purposes Committee **CONSIDERED** the Draft Budget for 2016/17 that had been presented by the Town Clerk & the report of the Finance Manager at the meeting held on 9th December 2016 (*Minute #441 of 2015/16 refers*).

The **RECOMMENDATIONS** of the Committee are reproduced below:

Committee **NOTED** that:

- (a) The draft budget has been prepared on the basis of a zero increase in precept per Band D equivalent. Although the total precept received has increased on the draft budget by £20,259 this is due to growth in the tax base from 7167.2 in the current year to 7397.0 for 2016/17.
- (b) The salaries budget includes provision for a pay award of 1%. A pay deal of 1% per year over 2 years is being negotiated by the National Joint Council and is likely to be accepted by the Employers' side. It also includes funding for an additional Community Services Officer which exists on the current staffing establishment but which has not been filled.
- (c) Growth in operational and events budgets (including the funding for the Community Survey) has been taken from the Environmental Enhancements budget of £102k that was unallocated last year following Council's decision not to renew the contract with Durham County Council for enhanced services. The remaining £41,838 from this line has been placed on a new 'Other Grants' line.
- (d) The draft budget contained a provision of £5,000 for the Horticultural Show; £8,000 for a cycling event and £8,000 for a Community Radio project that have not been previously approved by Council for inclusion in next year's budget.

Committee also **CONSIDERED** the following additional items that had not been factored into the draft budget:

- (e) The proposal from Groundworks North East to re-focus the Environmental Caretaker Scheme currently operating within Stanley;
- (f) A motion from the Communications & Events Committee to increase the budget for World War I Commemorations.
- (g) The future effect of changes to the LCTRS grant in the light of the Government's spending review. It was projected in July that the LCTRS grant provided by the County Council would decrease year on year over the medium term as detailed in the table below. The actual LCTRS settlement for 2016/17 is £130,804, a reduction of £4291 from the current year. Whilst this reduction in grant will be offset by the increase in the tax base for 2016/17, similar increases in future years cannot be relied upon and are unlikely to keep pace with the reduction in grant in future years. The projected decrease in the grant allocation is likely to be a minimum of £20,000 in 2017/18 and once the impact of the new funding settlement which the County Council will be subject to under the spending review is assessed it could be higher still. Members should not discount the possibility that reductions in the grant could be significantly higher than previously projected or it could be withdrawn altogether in the lifetime of the current Parliament.

Year	Grant (£)	Reduction (£)
Current	135,095	
2016/17	132,222	2,873
2017/18	114,160	18,062
2018/19	99,382	14,778
TOTAL		35,713

After a discussion, Committee made the following **RECOMMENDATIONS** to Council concerning the setting of the budget:

- (i) The proposal from Groundworks is a good one which would deliver tangible improvements to amenity across the Parish of Stanley and should be funded. Marking the entry and egress points of the Parish will both improve amenity and hopefully have a unifying effect. Softening the main shopping areas with flowers and planting will make the shopping areas more attractive for residents and visitors. Putting some growth into the Groundworks budget would also allow some flexibility if discussions with the County Council concerning transfer to the Town Council of parks and open spaces were to progress. The report requests a further **£47,400** be allocated to the Groundworks contract for delivery.

Committee have identified a number of options for Council to fund enhancement to the Groundworks contract:

Option 1 (No increase to the Precept)

If Council does not wish to increase the precept, the **£41,838** that has been allocated to the 'grants' line, (which was previously allocated to Environmental Enhancements) could be transferred to the Groundworks Contract. This would leave **£5562** to be found from other budget areas, which could be achieved by following recommendation (ii) below, or by not funding one or more of the items identified as not having been approved by Council in item (d) above.

Option 2 - Deletion of Post

If Council wished to retain the budget for Full Council grant funding, the vacant Community Services Officer post could be deleted, which would bring a saving of approximately **£24,000**. In combination with reductions in other areas could be used to offset the required cost.

Option 3 (2% increase to the Precept)

If the precept was to be increased by 2%, the additional **£13,036** could be used to in addition to reductions in other areas to offset the required cost.

The table below* gives some examples of how the additional funding for the Groundworks budget could be found, however a mix and match of the options presented or additional options could be identified.

The **RECOMMENDATION** of the Committee is that option 2 should not be taken at this stage. Once the Council has consulted the residents is the right time to re-examine the staffing structure to ensure it fits the five year plan that Council will develop over the coming year.

- (ii) Council should consider an increase in the precept of up to 2% to offset the current and future reductions in the LCTRS grant. A 2% increase this year would bring an additional **£13,036** in revenue. Over 3 years (based on this year's tax base), this would equate to **£39,109**. The reduction projected by DCC in July 2015 in the grant was estimated then to be

£35,713 over the same period but is likely to be higher in light of the funding settlement for the County Council that was recently announced. A 2% increase in the precept would increase the precept per Band D equivalent from **£88.12** to **£89.88**, an increase of **£1.76** per year. (For a Band A property, the increase would be from **£44.06** to **£44.94**, an increase of 88 pence.)

- (iii) Council should consider changes to the current MIF process to make the scheme easier to administrate, more transparent and more accessible for applicants. The current scheme does not ensure that available funding is distributed according to greatest need or benefit. The fact that some wards have twice as many members as others is based on population density and not necessarily because that is where organisations that would benefit from funding are located. Council should consider reducing or removing the individual MIF allowance and replacing it with a small grants scheme. There should also be an upper limit for grants, to ensure that the funding is spread between a number of groups or organisations.

***Table for item (i)**

Sources of Revenue	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
2% rise in precept			£13,036
Grants Budget	£41,838		£41,838
Cycling Event		£8,000	
World War 1		£5,000	
Community Radio		£8,000	
Horticulture Show		£5,000	
Post Deletion		£24,000	
10% reduction across events	£11,915		
Total	£53,753	£50,000.00	£54,874
Cost of Groundworks enhancements	£47,400	£47,400	£47,400

10 GROUNDWORKS COMMUNITY CARETAKER SCHEME (ATTACHMENT I)

The current contract with Groundworks North East is due for renewal at the end of 2015/16. The Town Clerk has reviewed the current scheme and concluded that whilst the team perform many useful tasks that are beneficial to the amenity of the Parish, the current mechanism for tasking them is used extensively by some members and less by others, with

the result that the service is not consistent across the Parish. The results are also difficult to communicate to the wider community as they are small, piecemeal projects.

The Town Clerk asked Groundworks to put forward proposals for improving local amenity that would be tangible and clearly recognisable to residents and visitors as something which sets Stanley apart from areas that did not have a Parish Council providing an enhanced service.

The proposal is attached and is based around adding signage and planting at entry and egress points to the Parish, and providing floral displays and hanging baskets in the shopping areas of the Parish. The proposal would support existing 'In Bloom' projects run by both the County Council and STC and would see projects delivered in every ward across the Parish.

The **RECOMMENDATION** of the Finance & General Purposes Committee is that the proposal should be approved and budget allocated to it. (*Minute #441 of 2015/16 refers*)

Council is **REQUESTED** to consider this matter and **DECIDE** what to do.

11 WORLD WAR ONE COMMEMORATIONS

At the meeting of the Communications & Events Committee held on 10th November 2015, Cllr L Marshall and R Harrison proposed and Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the WWI Memorial Sub-Committee be re-constituted. It was further **RECOMMENDED** that the unspent budget allocation from the current year for Remembrance Events be rolled forward to 2016/17 to increase the revenue budget for this project to £10,000 (*Minute #389 of 2015/16 refers*).

At the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 9th December 2015, it was **RECOMMENDED** that The Commemoration of World War I should focus on the centenary of the cessation of hostilities in 1918. Instead of allocating a revenue budget to the project in 2016/17, consideration should be given to setting up an larger earmarked reserve to fund a permanent memorial for the whole of Stanley to be unveiled and dedicated in 2018. (*Minute #441 of 2015/16 refers*)

Council is requested to **CONSIDER** this matter and **DECIDE** what to do.

12 APPLICATION FOR GRANT FUNDING (ATTACHMENT J)

The Just for Women Centre is a charity based in Stanley which provides activities and support for vulnerable women. An application for grant funding was submitted to the Town Council earlier in 2015. This application was considered but further information concerning accounts was requested. This information has now been provided.

Note: There is no budget allocation for grant funding in the budget. There is, however, unallocated budget in the Environmental Enhancements budget which would cover this expenditure if Council wished to support it.

Council is requested to **CONSIDER** this matter and **DECIDE** what to do.

13 PUSHBIKE PARKING (ATTACHMENT K)

Durham County Council are currently making free hoops to lock up bikes available to Town and Parish Councils and Community Centres. The Town Clerk has identified that the area between the steps and the Louisa Centre which is part of the demise of the Civic Hall but is always used as parking for contractors using the Louisa Centre would be an ideal location for visitors to both Civic Hall and Louisa Centre to park their bikes. It would also stop vans being parked in the location without having to resort to measures like bollards.

RECOMMENDATION: The Town Clerk should be authorised to apply for the bike parking hoops and have them installed in the identified location after the works to the Louisa Centre have been completed.

Council is requested to **CONSIDER** this matter and **DECIDE** what to do.

14 POLICY ON VAPING/ E-CIGARETTES IN THE CIVIC HALL (ATTACHMENT L)

The Civic Hall Manager has requested that Council gives consideration to the use of e-cigarettes and 'vaping' in the Civic Hall. There has been an increasing incidence of people 'vaping' at evening events and functions in the Civic Hall and there have been some complaints to staff from other users of the hall who are unhappy about the practice.

The Town Clerk has researched the matter and some information is attached. In short, it is not unlawful for e-cigarettes to be used or 'vaping' to take place within the Civic Hall, but it is a policy decision for the Town Council to make as to whether we permit it. A number of national businesses and transport operators have banned them whilst others have not.

Council is requested to **CONSIDER** this matter and **DECIDE** what to do.

15 BLUE PLAQUE SCHEME (ATTACHMENT M)

The Blue Plaque Scheme was launched following the decision of Council to implement it at the Ordinary Council meeting held on 24th November 2015. (*Minute #415 of 2015/16 refers*)

The Scheme has proven to be popular with residents, the Facebook post promoting it has received nearly 23,000 views and 173 likes. The page on the Town Council website has had 641 hits.

3 names of former residents have been put forward for consideration for blue plaques. They are:

- (i) David Horsley, West Stanley
- (ii) Michael Heaviside, VC, Craghead
- (iii) Tommy Armstrong, Tanfield Lea/ Tantobie

Brief Bios of all three are attached for information. Council is **REQUESTED** to consider this matter and **DECIDE** what to do.

16 DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 26th January 2016, 18.30 at the Civic Hall

In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, members of the public and press are welcome to attend the meeting. Members of the public will only be permitted to speak at the beginning of the meeting during Public Question Time.