

Seaton Valley Council

A Community Council

Minutes of a Meeting held on Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 7.00 pm. Online via Zoom.

The meeting started at 7.08 p.m.

PRESENT:

Councillors: S Stanners (Chair), S Dungworth, L Bowman, A Stanners, K. Collier, E Coulson, D Nesbitt, B Burt and S Hartland

IN ATTENDANCE:

S Potts – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Members of the public - 0

CO063/20 **1. Apologies for absence**
There were no apologies for absence

CO064/20 **2. Disclosure of interests**
There were no declarations of interest.

CO065/20 **3. Chair's Welcome and Civic Announcements**
The Chair welcomed everyone to the Council's last meeting of 2020 and thanked all of the students and their families who had helped to turn on the Christmas Lights in their villages last week.

CO066/20 **4. Public Question Time**
No questions had been submitted.

CO067/20 **5. County Councillor Update**
Cllr Dungworth gave a short update on NCC matters concentrating on two issues.

Firstly she drew attention to NCC's challenging budget position and said that significant savings still need to be identified to balance the Council's budget and secondly she referred to the funding for a replacement High School/Middle School in Seaton Valley appearing to have been slipped from the current year into next year's Capital Programme.

Councillor Dungworth is particularly concerned about the latter as fabric of the current building is not good and will require considerable repairs to be carried out (and funding made available to finance such repairs) if the new build date is slipped any further. Furthermore, proposals to locate a new Special Needs Unit within the new school will be delayed pending agreement of the new build model.

CO068/20 **6. Minutes of the Council's Meeting held on 20 September 2020**
.The minutes of Seaton Valley Council's Meeting held on 20 September 2020 were agreed as being a correct record and would be duly signed and dated by the Chair.

CO069/20 **7. Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 28 Oct 2020**

The minutes of the above committee were received

CO70/20 8. Services and Partnership Update

Councillors referred to a number of matters within the Services Officer's report and in particular to the items below:

- The Services Officer is looking into what other Council's policies are on siting Pidgeon Lofts within allotments as significant costs are being incurred to clear a vacant plot that housed such buildings,
- Food Bank referrals have more than doubled this year when compared to last year as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic,
- The Service officer is corresponding with an American supplier to try to arrange a repair to the large Climbing Frame in The Dunes Play Park Seaton Sluice as a like for like replacement will cost somewhere in the region of £20,000, and
- Whilst the pandemic didn't allow us to hold our usual Christmas Events we did manage to hold socially distanced switch ons at each of our villages – a video of the events is available via the Council's website.

CO71/20 9. Neighbourhood Plan Update

The eight week consultation period on our draft plan ended on 4 November 2020.

There was a good response to the consultation with 11 written responses from residents a number more from our formal consultation bodies.

.Work is now going on to collate the responses and to make any necessary changes/additions before the final plan can be submitted to NCC for examination.

CO72/20 10. Schedule of Meetings 2020

The Engagement and Development Officers report outlined a proposed schedule of meeting dates for the coming year. Members were happy to agree the proposed dates pending confirmation of said dates not clashing with NCC/Seaton Valley Federation meeting dates.

CO73/20 11. Free School Meals

The Clerks report provided a brief update on the action taken by the Clerk in conjunction with the Chair in relation to providing food vouchers to the parents of children entitled to free school meals in Seaton Valley – such vouchers were provided to help cover the cost of feeding these children during the school holidays.

Members were delighted to be able to get involved in this project when it became clear that neither the government nor the County Council were minded to provide the required funding.

The Clerk reported that 228 applications were processed during week commencing 26 October with each child being allocated vouchers to the value of £20.

Council RESOLVED TO: note the action taken by the Clerk and to retrospectively agree to fund expenditure of £4,500 on food vouchers issued to the families of children entitled to free school meals in Seaton Valley, such funding to be financed from general savings elsewhere in the Council's 2020/21 budgets.

CO74/20 12. Bank Reconciliation as at 16 November 2020

Council agreed to receive the report, and noted that the Council's bank accounts had been successfully reconciled to its financial records.

CO75/20 13. Budgetary Control Update

The Clerk presented his report which provided detailed and summary information on the Council's income and expenditure compared to budget as at 16 November 2020. In summary, the Clerk said that the Council's income and expenditure is more or less in line with budgets when previously reported expected variations are taken into account. The report highlighted one or two of these variances and provided explanations where required.

In conclusion the Clerk said that his latest projections suggest that the Council's budget is likely to be underspent by circa. £25,000 in 2020/21.

CO76/20 14. Budget Process and Update 2020/21

The Clerk's report laid out a schedule of meetings that is being used to draw up the Council's 2021/22 Annual Budget. The schedule is reproduced below for information:

2021/22 Budget Process – Work Schedule/Timetable

Date	Group	Purpose
Wed 28 Oct 2020 – 6.00pm Following Finance and GP Committee meeting	Budget Review Working Group	Review Initial Projections
Wed 11 Nov 2020 – 6.00pm	Budget Review Working Group	Review Base Budget
Wed 25 Nov 2020 – 7.00pm	Full Council	Review Latest Information
Wed 09 Dec 2020 – 6.00pm Following Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting at 6pm.	Budget Review Working Group	Review Latest Information
Wed 6 Jan 2021 – 6.00pm	Budget Review Working Group	Finalise Proposals
Wed 20 Jan 2021 – 7.00pm	Full Council	Agree 2021/22 Budget

The Clerk said that a similar process to previous year's is being followed i.e. the Finance and General Purposes Committee is taking on the role of Budget Review Working Group which considers summary information on the build-up of the Council's base budget at various stages of the process, the latest projections of the current year's income and expenditure as compared to budgets, the latest estimated of unallocated reserves and recommends potential areas for saving.

The Clerk went on to say that in essence his projection of the estimated base budget (Appendix 9A of his report) showed the starting point for political group(s) to begin preparing any budget proposals they may have for the 2021/22 financial year.

After applying inflationary increases and taking into account all known changes at that time, the Clerk's projections showed that the repriced base budget showed a current surplus of £11,000. This means that any new initiatives can be supported from this surplus in the first instance and/or from reserves or from savings elsewhere in the budget, should additional

funding be required.

The Clerk pointed out that his 2021/22 budget projections included an allowance for a 2% increase in Council Tax and said that adjustments would need to be made for any proposed increases above or below this level.

In concluding his report the Clerk said that he expects the amount of the Council's unallocated reserves to be in the region of £37,000 at the end of the current financial year.

At the conclusion of the debate Council **RESOLVED TO note the report and in particular further note that political groups/individual members should submit any 2021/22 budget proposals they may have to the Clerk by Friday 08 January.**

CO77/20 15. Dates of Future Meetings

2020	Committee/Council	Time	Venue
Wednesday 09 December	Finance and General Purposes	6pm	On Line via Zoom

2020	Committee/Council	Time	Venue
Wednesday 20 January	Full Council	7pm	On Line via Zoom
Wednesday 24 March	Full Council	7pm	On Line via Zoom
Wednesday 28 April	Full Council	7pm	On Line via Zoom

CO078/20 16. Request for Support – Northumberland Community Bank

The Clerks report sought a decision on whether or not the Council wished to make a donation to the above organisation following a significant drop in its income levels as a direct result of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The organisation has written to all parish council's in Northumberland asking them to support the Community Bank in these unprecedented times. The bank provided a substantial amount of information in support of its request and is hoping to raise a total sum of £50,000 to ensure its business model continues to be viable and to ensure that the organisation is available to its members once the country emerges from the current crisis.

Insofar as Seaton Valley is concerned the Community Bank has 152 clients on its books.

After considering the Clerks report and the information provided Council **RESOLVED TO make an immediate donation of £1,000 to the Northumberland Community Bank and to work with the bank to encourage additional take up of the organisations services in Seaton Valley.**

There being no other business on the Agenda, the meeting closed at 8.15pm

Signed by the Chair:

Dated: