

Seaton Valley Council

A Community Council

Minutes of a Meeting held on Wednesday 20 January 2021 at 7.00 pm. Online via Zoom.

The meeting started at 7.02 p.m.

PRESENT: Councilors:	S Stanners (Chair), B Burt, S Dungworth, E Coulson, K. Collier, L Bowman and D. Nesbitt
IN ATTENDANCE: S Potts – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer D. Freeman – Engagement and Development Officer T. Gribbin – Neighbourhood Partnership Manager	
CO001/21	1. Apologies for absence Cllr S Hartland and Cllr A Stanners had submitted apologies for their absences.
CO002/21	2. Disclosure of interests There were no declarations of interest.
CO003/21	3. Chair's Welcome and Civic Announcements The Chair welcomed everyone to the Council's first meeting of the new calendar year and wished everyone a Happy New Year. He also specifically welcomed Tony Gribbin to the meeting who was attending as an observer. There were no further civic announcements.
CO004/21	4. Public Question Time No comments or questions had been submitted.
CO005/21	5. County Councillor Update Cllr Dungworth gave a brief update on NCC matters mentioning preparations for its 2021/22 Budget Proposals and preparations for the May local government elections in particular. In respect of the former, Cllr Dungworth said that the Council was expecting another tough budget round with significant savings still to be identified. She expected Council Tax levels to increase by 5% (2% for general increases and 3% for the Social Services premium). And with regard to the local Elections, Cllr Dungworth reported that the government is still planning to hold elections on 6 May so NCC is pushing ahead with its preparations. In particular it is about to start a publicity drive to encourage more people to take up postal votes.
CO007/21	7. Minutes of Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Thursday 10 December 2020 Members agreed to receive and note the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 10 December 2020.

CO008/21	<p>8. Services and Partnership Update</p> <p>In reviewing the Service Officer's report the Chair highlighted the following matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concrete exterior wall at West Terrace Allotments will need to be replaced within the next five years – officers will look at options over the next few months, • Work to remove some old pigeon lofts at Seaton Terrace allotments is now almost complete, • The Christmas Present appeal was very successful despite the short period it was organised over. Members were keen to organize something similar in 2021, • The replacement netting for the out of commission large climbing frame at the Dunes Play Area has been ordered and will hopefully be here and installed in time for the Easter holidays, • New bus shelters at Tillmouth Avenue and New Hartley shops are scheduled to be installed during the first three weeks of February, and • A further Covid Risk Assessment is due to be carried out at Seaton Delaval Avenue Head Toilets to determine whether or not it is safe for them to be re-opened.
CO009/21	<p>9. Neighbourhood Plan</p> <p>The Clerk reported that the eight week consultation period on the Pre-Submission Draft of the Council's Neighbourhood Plan had ended on 4 November 2020. The Council received a number of positive comments supporting the principle of the plan and was updated as and where necessary.</p> <p>The Submission Draft itself has now been completed and had been circulated to Councillors together with a number of supporting documents.</p> <p>After a short debate COUNCIL RESOLVED TO: approve the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan Submission Draft and Policies Map and forward them to NCC for further consultation prior them being submitted to an Independent Examiner.</p>
CO010/21	<p>10. Bank Reconciliation as at 12 January 2021</p> <p>Council agreed to receive the Clerk's report and noted that there was a small discrepancy between the Council's bank accounts and its financial records that still needed to be reconciled.</p>
CO011/21	<p>11. Budgetary Control Update</p> <p>The Clerk presented his report which provided detailed and summary information on the Council's income and expenditure compared to budget as at 12 January 2021. 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.</p> <p>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 once budget carry forwards and contributions to earmarked reserves had been taken into account.</p>
CO012/21	<p>12. Budget Proposals 2020/21</p> <p>The Chair presented the Labour Group's 2021/22 Budget Proposals which had been circulated to all members as Appendices 7, 7A and 7B.</p>

In presenting the Labour Group's proposals he referred to the process that is gone through to arrive at the re priced base budget which becomes the starting point for the following year's budget discussions. He also referred to the process that is used to confirm the level of the Council's reserves and the reliance placed on the Clerk to recommend the minimum level of reserves the Council should hold.

Turning to the detail of his report the Chair said that he was very pleased to be able to propose a budget on behalf of the Labour Group that freezes Council Tax and Allotment Rents in Seaton Valley at 2020/21 levels; which continues to provide funding for the Council's core services and which confirms a funding allocation of £50,000 (£10,000 per village) to fund small projects that will be of lasting benefit to our communities.

In closing his remarks the Chair referred to a current national issue that is having a direct effect on the students of Seaton Valley i.e. schools not being able to provide laptops (or similar devices) to students who haven't got ready access to them at home. The Chair said that he was very disappointed that the Government hadn't allocated sufficient funds to Local Authorities to allow such equipment to be provided, particularly to low income families, and that it is a national disgrace that some students are unable to access on line learning resources during the current crisis. He then went on to propose that the Council allocates £20,000 from its unallocated reserves to give out as grants to local schools in Seaton Valley to help them meet the gaps they have in laptop provision.

Following the Chair's comments there was a short debate on the whole of the Labour Group's proposals including the proposal to allocate a further £20,000 from unallocated reserves to help fund laptop provision for students in Seaton Valley – all members spoke in support of the proposals.

At the end of the debate the Chair moved the Labour Group's budget proposals, including the use of £20,000 from unallocated reserves to fund student laptop provision, and

Cllr Collier seconded the Chair's motion.

All present supported the motion and as a consequence, Council **RESOLVED TO:**

- a) **Approve the build-up of the 2021/22 Budgets as shown at Appendix 7A of the Clerks report which include the budget proposals of the Labour Group outlined in the body of the report,**
- b) **Agree to set a Council Tax Precept of £572,170**
- c) **Note that in agreeing to set a Council Tax Precept of £572,170, Seaton Valley Council's element of the Council Tax will remain the same as the current year at £121.10 per annum (Band D Equivalents),**
- d) **Note that Seaton Valley Council's Band 'D' Equivalent Council Tax base has reduced from 4,788.37 to 4724.77,**
- e) **Further note that in setting a Council Tax precept of £572,170 the amounts of annual Council Tax payable in respect of Seaton Valley Council will be approximately:**

• Band A £80.72	Band E £148.02
• Band B £94.20	Band F £174.93
• Band C £107.65	Band G £201.84
• Band D £121.10	Band H £242.40

	<p>f) Freeze Allotment Rents at the levels identified in the table at paragraph 13 of the Clerk’s report,</p> <p>g) Agree to continue to subscribe to the Society of Local Council Clerks, the Co Operative Council’s Innovation Network and to the Northumberland branch of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) ,</p> <p>h) Agree to maintain current rent levels for the two flats it owns,</p> <p>i) Agree to allocate £20,000 from unallocated reserves to help fund student laptop provision in Seaton Valley schools, and</p> <p>j) Agree to maintain the Council’s minimum level of non-earmarked reserves at its current level of £90,000.</p>												
CO013/21	<p>13. Dates of Future Scheduled Meetings</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="320 741 1498 904"> <thead> <tr> <th>2020</th> <th>Committee/Council</th> <th>Time</th> <th>Venue</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Wednesday 24 March</td> <td>Full Council</td> <td>7pm</td> <td>On Line via Zoom</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wednesday 29 April</td> <td>Full Council</td> <td>7pm</td> <td>On Line via Zoom</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2020	Committee/Council	Time	Venue	Wednesday 24 March	Full Council	7pm	On Line via Zoom	Wednesday 29 April	Full Council	7pm	On Line via Zoom
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There being no other business on the Agenda, the meeting closed at 8.20pm

Signed by the Chair: _____

Dated: _____