

# Seaton Valley Council

## A Community Council

**Minutes of a Zoom On Line Meeting held on Wednesday 24 March 2021 at 7.00 pm.**

The meeting started at 7.02 p.m.

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| <b>PRESENT:</b><br>Councillors:   | S Stanners (Chair), S Dungworth, E Coulson, K. Collier, L Bowman, D Nesbitt, B Burt, A Stanners and S. Hartland  |
| <b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b><br>S Potts – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer<br>3 Representatives from Britishvolt Plc<br><br>One member of the public was present. |  |
| <b>CO014/21</b>   | <b>1. Apologies for absence</b><br>All present   |
| <b>CO015/21</b>   | <b>2. Disclosure of interests</b><br>There were no declarations of interest.   |
| <b>CO016/21</b>   | <b>3. Chair's Welcome and Civic Announcements</b><br>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular guest speakers from Britishvolt Plc. The Chair announced that Agenda item 10 - Britishvolt Update would be heard immediately after Public Question Time before moving on to the remainder of the agenda.<br><br>There were no further civic announcements.   |
| <b>CO017/21</b>   | <b>4. Public Question Time</b><br>A number of linked questions had been submitted by a resident from Seghill, all concerned with environmental issues. The Chair asked the Clerk to respond to the questions by email.<br><br>There were no further questions from members of the public.  |
| <b>CO018/21</b>   | <b>5. Britishvolt Update</b><br>Representatives from Britishvolt Plc had been invited to the meeting to provide an overview on the company's proposals to develop a lithium car battery plant on the old Blyth Power Station Site. The Chair introduced Martin Reynolds (Chief Governing Officer), Tracy Machnicki (Social Value Manager) and Guy Wakefield (Planning Consultant) and invited them to make their presentation.<br>The officers gave a quite detailed presentation the highlights of which were as follows : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 230 acre site to be developed and will be referred to as a Gigaplant</li> <li>• Only batteries for electric vehicles will be manufactured</li> <li>• Factory will operate on 'green' principles using recyclable materials wherever possible</li> <li>• Ultra clean environment working conditions,</li> <li>• Site has excellent rail, sea and road links,</li> <li>• Planning consultation documents have just been released by NCC and company is</li> </ul> |

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|                 | <p>now in full pre planning discussions,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The company will have strong social values and will recruit locally as far as possible,</li> <li>• Links to local schools are currently being established</li> <li>• First jobs likely to materialize in early 2023 with batteries being produced by the end of that year,</li> <li>• Up to 3,000 jobs with at least that from other companies supplying the plant,</li> <li>• Lots of well-paid skilled jobs</li> <li>• Kick start to other companies setting up in the area,</li> </ul> <p>Members thanked the officers for their presentation and said that they were fully supportive of the proposals and looked forward to the factory coming on steam as soon as possible.</p> <p>At the end of the discussions Cllr Dungworth asked if employees would be free to join a trade union – the reply given was a little non-committal with officers emphasizing that terms and conditions of employment would match the highest standards available in the private sector.</p>   |
| <b>CO019/21</b> | <p><b>6. County Councillor Update</b></p> <p>Cllr Dungworth provided a brief verbal report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Democratic Services officers are gearing up for the forthcoming local government elections to be held on 6<sup>th</sup> May.</li> <li>• A series of Coastal Summits have been set up to discuss increased pressure from visitors on mainly coastal resorts in Northumberland i.e. to prepare for the approaching summer months and to try to take remedial action.</li> <li>• All NCC members are trying to use up their Members Small schemes Funds as balances are unable to be carried forward in election years, and</li> <li>• Finally, NCC do not have any further Council Meetings scheduled before the May elections, the last full Council Meeting was held at the end of February.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>CO020/21</b> | <p><b>7. Minutes of the Council's last Meeting</b></p> <p>The minutes of the Council's meeting held on 20 January 2021 were agreed and accepted as a true record of that meeting.</p>  |
| <b>CO021/21</b> | <p><b>8. Services and Partnership Update</b></p> <p>In reviewing the Service Officer's report the Chair highlighted the following matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allotment rent invoices have been dispatched for the new year,</li> <li>• Work to renew the damaged concrete posts at West Terrace Allotments have been ordered,</li> <li>• Work is ongoing to clear a couple of large allotments our Seaton Terrace site, this includes the need to dispose of asbestos waste,</li> <li>• A number of members commended the work of the various In Bloom Groups which has continued throughout the lockdown,</li> <li>• Similarly members thanked officers for their work with Blyth Foodbank during the lockdown period – the support given to many vulnerable families has been a lifeline to some of them,</li> <li>• The replacement climbing frame net has been delivered was in the process of being installed at the Dunes Play Area,</li> <li>• New bus shelters are now in place at Tillmouth Avenue and New Hartley shops,</li> <li>• A scheduled of village litter picks has been agreed, two per village over a 12 month</li> </ul> |

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|                 | <p>period, and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Children's 2021 Christmas Light Competition has been completed with the winning designs being sent off for drafting.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>CO022/21</b> | <p><b>9. Updated Allotments Letting and Management Policy</b></p> <p>The Clerk spoke to the Service Officer and his joint report and outlined the main changes being proposed to the current Allotment Policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The height of internal fences – now maximum of 4ft instead of 5ft,</li> <li>Making it more explicit that external gates must be kept locked at all times,</li> <li>Making it a requirement to register livestock, including cockerels and in the case of the latter made it clear that tenants have to remove cockerels immediately if any complaints are received about the noise they make,</li> <li>Creating the concept of an Introductory Tenancies for new tenants,</li> <li>Restricting the number of plots per household to one for new tenancies, and</li> <li>Simplifying the review, enforcement and appeals processes.</li> </ul> <p>Members supported the changes and felt that the updated policy was much easier to read and follow than the previous version and after a short discussion <b>COUNCIL RESOLVED TO: approve the updated allotments letting and management policy attached at appendix 3A to the Clerk and Service Officers' joint report and for the new policy to come into force with immediate effect.</b></p> |
| <b>CO023/21</b> | <p><b>10. Engagement and Development Officer Update</b></p> <p>In reviewing the Engagement and Development Officer's report the Chair highlighted the following matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The latest edition of our Futures Magazine was delivered during week commencing 8 March and contains a four page article on the Council's achievements over the last four years,</li> <li>The draft Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted to NCC for independent examination,</li> <li>Speed indicator signs continue to be managed and rotated,</li> <li>Active Northumberland are about to start their Easter Holiday activities programme, full details of the programme were provided in the appendix to the report. Packed lunches are to be provided at venues where this can be carried out in a Covid safe environment, and</li> <li>The Engagement and Development Officer has recently visited the refurbished Seaton Delaval Hall – the changes are excellent and members commented that they are looking forward to seeing the changes themselves in the coming months as Covid restrictions are hopefully lifted.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>CO024/21</b> | <p><b>11. Annual Investment Strategy</b></p> <p>The Clerk presented his own report which set out a strategy for investing the Council's day to day cash balances. In essence the strategy recognised that as return levels are abnormally low all investments for the foreseeable future will be made over the very short term and that should a decision be made to invest for periods of over six months then a separate report will be submitted to Council prior to such an investment being authorised.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: to approve the 2021/22 Investment Strategy attached to the Clerks report at Appendix 6A</b></p>  |

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| CO025/21 | <p><b>12. Request for Support – Northumberland Citizens Advice Bureau</b></p> <p>Council had received a written request for support from the Northumberland Citizens Advice Bureau (a copy of the Bureau’s letter was attached to the Clerk’s report as Appendix 7A). The Bureau has seen increased demand during the Covid pandemic and at the same time is experienced reduced support from its funders.</p> <p>After discussing the request and praising the Bureau’s work over the last 12 months</p> <p><b>COUNCIL RESOLVED TO: make a donation of £1,000 to Northumberland Citizens Advice Bureau and urge it to consider reopening its surgery in Seaton Delaval once Covid restrictions are lifted.</b></p>  |
| CO026/21 | <p><b>13. Updated Asset Register</b></p> <p>The Clerk presented the Councils’ latest Asset Register which identified all assets in Council ownership. Members asked a number of questions about specific assets and then:</p> <p><b>RESOLVED TO: approve the makeup of the Council’s Asset Register attached as Appendix 8A to the Clerk’s report</b></p>  |
| CO027/21 | <p><b>14. Updated Risk Register</b></p> <p>The Clerk presented his report which highlighted the main risks facing the Council analysed across a number of categories. The report assessed the likelihood and potential impact of such risks and described the control actions that are in place to mitigate the identified risks.</p> <p>In discussing the report; members touched on the practical and reactive approach taken by the Council during the Covid pandemic and asked the clerk to provide a report on the matter to a subsequent meeting of Council</p> <p>Additionally, Councillor Dungworth suggested that we use the experience of continuing to deliver Council Services during the pandemic to develop a series of actions/procedures to mitigate the risk of facing a further pandemic like event in the future i.e. plan for Business as Usual as far as practicable.</p> <p>After considering the risks identified Council:</p> <p><b>RESOLVED TO receive and approve the Risk Register attached as Appendix 10A to the Clerk’s report and to encourage all members to take an active role in the Council’s risk management processes.</b></p> |
| CO028/21 | <p><b>15. Bank Reconciliation as at 11 March 2021</b></p> <p>Council agreed to receive the report, and noted that the Council’s bank accounts had been successfully reconciled to its financial records.</p>   |
| CO029/21 | <p><b>16. Budgetary Control Update</b></p> <p>In presenting his report the Clerk said that the projected underspend on this year’s accounts was likely to be in line with previous estimates i.e. circa £25,000 after adjusting for required budget carry forwards. The Clerk said that he was very happy with this level of variance on a gross budget of over £600,000.</p> <p>His report identified the main reasons for the under spend, all of which had been previously drawn to Council’s attention.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: to note the budgetary control position presented in the Clerks’ report.</b></p>  |

| CO030/21           | <p><b>17. Councils for Fair Tax Declaration</b></p> <p>The Chair of the Council had been instrumental in bringing this proposal to Council which asked the Council sign up to a Fair Tax Declaration. In essence the declaration says that the council will be open and honest in its own tax dealings and will support businesses that are also open and honest in their own tax dealings.</p> <p>After a short debate in which all members spoke in favour of signing up to the declaration Council unanimously <b>RESOLVED TO:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Approve the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration shown in the body of the Clerk's report,</b></li> <li>2. <b>Lead by example and demonstrate good practice in our tax conduct, right across our activities,</b></li> <li>3. <b>Ensure as far as practicable, that our contractors implement IR35 robustly and pay a fair share of employment taxes,</b></li> <li>4. <b>Seek clarity on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers and their consolidated profit and loss position,</b></li> <li>5. <b>Promote Fair Tax Mark certification for any business in which we have a significant stake and where corporation tax is due,</b></li> <li>6. <b>Support Fair Tax week events in the area, and celebrate the tax contribution made by responsible businesses who say what they pay with pride, and</b></li> <li>7. <b>Support calls for urgent reform of EU and UK law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies</b></li> </ol> |        |                   |      |       |                    |              |        |                  |                  |  |        |                  |
|--------------------|--|--------|-------------------|------|-------|--------------------|--------------|--------|------------------|------------------|--|--------|------------------|
| CO031/21           | <p><b>18. Dates of Future Scheduled Meetings</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="320 972 1497 1146"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="320 972 576 1010">2020</th> <th data-bbox="576 972 976 1010">Committee/Council</th> <th data-bbox="976 972 1182 1010">Time</th> <th data-bbox="1182 972 1497 1010">Venue</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1010 576 1084">Wednesday 28 April</td> <td data-bbox="576 1010 976 1084">Full Council</td> <td data-bbox="976 1010 1182 1084">7.30pm</td> <td data-bbox="1182 1010 1497 1084">On Line via Zoom</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 1084 576 1146">Wednesday 19 May</td> <td data-bbox="576 1084 976 1146">Annual Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting</td> <td data-bbox="976 1084 1182 1146">6.30pm</td> <td data-bbox="1182 1084 1497 1146">On Line via Zoom</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>   | 2020   | Committee/Council | Time | Venue | Wednesday 28 April | Full Council | 7.30pm | On Line via Zoom | Wednesday 19 May | Annual Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting | 6.30pm | On Line via Zoom |
| 2020               | Committee/Council  | Time   | Venue             |      |       |                    |              |        |                  |                  |  |        |                  |
| Wednesday 28 April | Full Council   | 7.30pm | On Line via Zoom  |      |       |                    |              |        |                  |                  |  |        |                  |
| Wednesday 19 May   | Annual Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting   | 6.30pm | On Line via Zoom  |      |       |                    |              |        |                  |                  |  |        |                  |

There being no other business on the Agenda the meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed by the Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_