

Seaton Valley Council

A Community Council

Minutes of a Meeting held on Wednesday 23 November 2022 at 7.00 pm in Council Offices, Seaton Delaval.

The meeting started at 7.02 p.m.

PRESENT:

Councillors: S Dungworth (Chair), G Eastwood (Vice Chair), L Bowman, S Bowman, E Coulson, D Ferguson, E Chicken and J Henderson.

IN ATTENDANCE:

S Potts – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

Members of the public - 0

CO068/22 **1. Apologies for absence**
There were no apologies for absence

CO069/22 **2. Disclosure of interests**
None

CO070/22 **3. Chair's Welcome and Civic Announcements**
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and firstly asked everyone to observe two minutes silence in remembrance of her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This was the council's first full meeting since her death in September.

The Chair then reminded all Councillors about the Christmas light events later that week and in the following week and announced that Kim McGuinness (Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner) would be attending the Council's January meeting.

CO071/22 **4. Public Question Time**
None

CO072/22 **5. Presentation by Michelle Redfern, Locality Coordinator, Northumberland Communities Together.**

Michelle was in attendance and provided an update on the services provided by Northumberland Communities Together in South East Northumberland. She also gave a brief history of how the service had developed since its conception as a response to the Covid 19 crisis. In brief the service acts as a triage, referring clients on to their various partners, CAB, food banks, etc.

The Service has received substantial Cost of Living Support Funding from central government and has in turn, worked hard to distribute this funding to partners that have seen their costs increase as a result of this latest crisis. Seaton Valley Council received a contribution of £10,000 from these funds.

At the end of her presentation Michelle answered a number of general and more specific questions from members before leaving the meeting.

CO073/22

6. County Councillor Update

Cllr Bowman gave a short update on NCC matters:

- NCC is facing a number of budget pressures, not least from the Cost-of-Living crisis. Significant savings will have to be agreed as part of the 2023/24 budget round and as a first step, all staff have been given the opportunity to apply for Voluntary Redundancy,
- Development of the Northumberland Line and the new station at Seaton Delaval are progressing well. The County Council is reviewing public transport links to the various stations on the Northumberland Line and is working with providers with a view to improving such links. Cllr Chicken said that footpaths and cycle ways to and from stations are also being reviewed and Cllr Ferguson said that he will continue to lobby the County Council to improve both issues in Seaton Valley,
- Cllr Bowman expressed concern about the future of Seaton Delaval library after the completion of the new high/middle school to the east of Manners Gardens. The plans for the new school do not include community library facilities. Cllr Bowman said that he would continue to lobby for alternative library provision in Seaton Delaval and reminded members that a community library service is currently provided from within Astley High School,
- Cllr Dungworth asked if there was any sign of doorstep glass recycling being introduced throughout Northumberland. In response Councillors Ferguson and Chicken said that they were disappointed with the time it is taking to complete the various pilot schemes in Northumberland. One of the issues causing the delay is frequent requests from DEFRA for additional information. All Councillors agreed that doorstep glass recycling would be of benefit to Seaton Valley residents and would make a significant contribution to recycling targets.

CO074/22

7. Minutes of the Council's Meeting held on 27 July 2021

The minutes of Seaton Valley Council's Meeting held on 27 July 2021 were agreed as being a correct record and would be duly signed and dated by the Chair.

CO075/22

8. Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 27 Oct 2022

The minutes of the above committee were received and following discussion it was agreed to amend the minute relating to the distribution of the Council's Cost of Living Support Grant from the County Council. Consequently, Council **Resolved to distribute the grant received from NCC in the following manner:**

- **Food Hubs/Warm Hubs/Breakfast Clubs – £500 per qualifying establishment – budget of up to £7,000,**
- **Blyth Food Bank - £1,000**
- **Top up Christmas Present Appeal - £2,000**
- **Balance to be allocated once final spend known**

To qualify for grant support, organisations (Warm Hubs/Food Hubs and/or Breakfast Clubs) should operate from non-commercial premises and have a safeguarding policy in place; be open for at least an additional 2 hours per week over and above their normal opening times; be formally constituted and provide free or subsidised refreshments to residents taking advantage of their facilities.

- CO076/22 9. Minutes of the Planning Committee held on 22 August 2022**
The Council received and noted the minutes of the above meeting
- CO07722 10. Services and Partnership Update**
The Clerk introduced the Services Officers report and firstly drew attention to the need to instal a one-metre-high bow topped fence at the recently installed Northside Place play area. The Clerk also highlighted the dates for the Christmas Light turn on events and the Christmas Present appeal distribution event. In concluding this item on the agenda Council **RESOLVED TO: install a fence around the new play park at Northside Place, Holywell at a cost of £9,000, to be funded from the Council’s Playparks Repairs and Renewals Fund.**
- CO078/22 11. Seaton Valley Area Plan**
The Engagement and Development Officer’s report provided a summary of the work ‘Your Back Yard’ had completed to develop the final version of the Seaton Valley Area Plan. The Plan was attached as an appendix to the report.
- Members **Resolved to adopt the new plan and agreed to use it as a basis for informing new initiatives over the following five years.** The plan highlights nine priority area for potential action:
- Enhancing the councils’ activities programme for young people.
 - Creation of a youth action fund
 - Creation of ‘green routes’ in the Valley
 - Facilitate the establishment of a school climate change conference
 - Extend support around finances and benefits
 - Facilitate a Seaton Valley jobs fair
 - Consider providing energy efficiency advice and support to residents in the Valley
 - Set up an intergenerational digital inclusion project, and
 - Enhance the exercise and activities programme offered for older adults
- CO079/22 12. Defibrillator**
The Engagement and Development Officers report outlined a proposal to purchase a defibrillator to be located outside the Council Offices in Seaton Delaval. It had recently come to light that there isn’t a working defibrillator in the Season Delaval town centre area. Members agreed that a defibrillator should be acquired as a matter of urgency and Council **RESOLVED TO: purchase a defibrillator at an estimated cost of £2,000 to be sited on the wall outside the Council’s Offices in Seaton Delaval – costs to be funded from the existing Community Fund budget.**
- CO080/22 13. Audited Annual Return 2021/22**
The Clerks report informed Council that its external auditors PKF Littlejohn had successfully completed their audit of the council’s 2021/22 Annual Return and had provided the Council with a clean bill of health and did not highlight any areas of concern to draw to the attention of members. Council **RESOLVED TO approve and accept the Council’s audited Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2022 and noted that no issues were raised by the external auditors.**
- CO081/22 14. Bank Reconciliation as at 14 November 2022**
Council agreed to receive the report and noted that the Council’s bank accounts had been successfully reconciled to its financial records.

CO082/22 15. 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 14 November 2022. 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. £40,000 in 2022/23.

Cllr Eastwood reported that agreement had now been reached on how the balance of the budget on the Seghill Members Small Schemes Fund is to be spent. £2,000 is being contributed to the new artwork outside Seghill Community Centre, 4 new benches will be acquired and installed at locations close to The Welfare (£2,000), £500 is to be contributed to the older persons Christmas treat fund, cherry trees are to be planted alongside a section of the A190 (£1,500) and wildflower seed is to be purchased for a location to be agreed (£500).

CO083/22 16. Budget Process and Update 2023/24

The Clerk's report laid out a schedule of meetings that is being used to draw up the Council's 2023/24 Annual Budget. The schedule is reproduced below for information:

2023/24 Budget Process – Work Schedule/Timetable

Date	Group	Purpose
Thur 27 Oct 2022 – 6.00pm	Finance and General Purposes Committee	Agree timetable
Mon 7 Nov 2022 – 6.00pm	Budget Review Working Group	Review Base Budget and initial projections
Wed 23 Nov 2022 – 7.00pm	Full Council	Review Latest Information
Wed 07 Dec 2022 – 6.00pm	Finance and General Purposes Committee	Review Latest Information
Wed 11 Jan 2023 – 6.00pm	Budget Review Working Group	Finalise Proposals
Fri 13 Jan 2023	Political Groups	Deadline for Submitting Proposals
Wed 18 Jan 2023 – 7.00pm	Full Council	Agree 2022/23 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 10A of his report) showed the starting point for political group(s) to begin preparing any budget proposals they may have for the 2023/24 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 deficit of £9,000.

The Clerk pointed out that his 2023/24 budget projections included an allowance for a 3% 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 £110,000 at the end of the current financial year.

CO084/22

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 2022/23 budget proposals they may have to the Clerk by Friday 13 January 2023.**

17. Proposed Council Meeting Dates 2022

The Engagement and Development Officers report outlined a proposed schedule of meeting dates for the coming year. Members were asked to raise any concerns they may have about any of the proposed dates within 7 days, as the dates are due to be posted on the Council's website in mid December.

18. Dates of Future Meetings

2022	Committee/Council	Time	Venue
Wednesday 07 December	Finance and General Purposes	6pm	Seaton Valley Council Offices, Seaton Delaval

2023	Committee/Council	Time	Venue
Wednesday 18 January	Full Council	7pm	Seaton Sluice Community Centre
Wednesday 22 March	Full Council	7pm	Seaton Delaval Community Centre
Wednesday 26 April	Full Council	7pm	Seaton Valley Council Offices, Seaton Delaval

There being no other business on the Agenda, the meeting closed at 8.20pm

Signed by the Chair _____

Dated _____

