

Seaton Valley Council

A Community Council

Minutes of a Meeting held at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 22 March 2023 at Seaton Delaval and Holywell Community Centre

The meeting started at 7.00 pm.

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| PRESENT: Councillors S Dungworth (Chair), G Eastwood, E Coulson, S Bowman, L Bowman, A Stanners, D Ferguson, J Henderson and E Chicken | |
| IN ATTENDANCE: S Potts – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (Retiring) S Aldridge – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (Newly Appointed) | |
| CO016/23 | 1. Apologies for absence There were no apologies for absence. |
| CO017/23 | 2. Disclosure of interests There were no declarations of interest. |
| CO018/23 | 3. Chair's Welcome and Civic Announcements The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded those attending that the current Clerk had retired and would be leaving his position on 31 March 2023. A new Clerk and RFO has been appointed, S Aldridge – also in attendance - and they are currently working together to support a successful transition. The Chair announced that following a recent road traffic accident a defibrillator has now been fitted to the wall outside Seaton Valley Council Offices. There were no further civic announcements. |
| CO019/23 | 4. Public Question Time There were no questions that related to Seaton Valley Council. |
| CO020/23 | 5. County Councillor Update Cllr L Bowman updated the council on two issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Firstly, NCC has agreed a council tax increase of 6%, which includes a 2% surcharge for adult and social care. - He also reported that the new Northumberland rail line will open in August 2024, bringing quicker access to Newcastle and Ashington. There are ongoing discussions with Arriva about linking up bus services with the new rail service, including a ticketing system that will allow passengers to travel on bus and rail using a single ticket. Cllr E Chicken added that the works on the station would be restarting very soon. |
| CO021/23 | 6. Minutes of the Council's last meeting The minutes of the Council's Meeting held on 18 January 2023 were agreed and accepted as a true record of that meeting. |

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| | <p>The Chair drew attention to the section on speeding motorists under item 4 and confirmed that the clerk had written to NCC in collaboration with the Crime Commissioner and Neighbourhood Police Team with regards to speeding motorists in Seaton Sluice. NCC has recently responded, and the clerk agreed to draft a response and copy all correspondence to councillors.</p> |
| CO022/23 | <p>7. Minutes of the Planning Committee Members agreed to receive and note the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 02 February 2023 and 07 March 2023.</p> |
| CO023/23 | <p>8. Services and Partnership Update The clerk confirmed that fencing around North Side Place is almost complete and the bus shelter in Seaton Sluice that was damaged during Storm Arwen will be replaced on 27th March. The dates for the Christmas Lights events have all been confirmed.</p> |
| CO024/23 | <p>9. Review of Allotment Lettings and Management Policy The clerk drew attention to the most significant updates in the Allotment Lettings and Management Policy which were summarised in Appendix 5 including more stringent cultivation standards, rules on the keeping of livestock, and clarification on when allotment holders can visit after dark.</p> <p>Cllr J Henderson reported that a resident has contacted her about the death of a cat as a result of spikes erected around one of the allotment sites and asked if this was permitted. The Service Officer confirmed that barbed wire is not permitted however plastic spikes are allowed to deter birds from landing.</p> <p>After considering the updated Allotment Lettings and Management Policy, the Council RESOLVED TO: Approve and adopt the updated Allotment Lettings and Management policy attached at Appendix 5A to the clerk’s report.</p> |
| CO025/23 | <p>10. Coronation of King Charles III The clerk confirmed that a number of applications have been received for the £500 grant to help celebrate the King’s Coronation. He also confirmed that 820 commemorative coins have been purchased and will be handed out to all first school pupils in the Valley before the Coronation weekend.</p> |
| CO026/23 | <p>11. Request for Warm Hub Grant Support – New Hartley Club The clerk gave a brief summary of the background to the application included in Appendix 7, drawing attention to the Council’s decision to exclude commercial premises, which he understood to include licensed premises.</p> <p>Members debated the criteria for Warm Hubs including safeguarding policies and intended opening hours and were not clear as to whether New Hartley Club fully meets these criteria.</p> <p>After considering the Clerk’s report, Council RESOLVED TO: Defer a decision until the next meeting in April and in the meantime to gather more information from New Hartley Club.</p> |
| CO027/23 | <p>12. Request for Additional Financial Support – Seaton Delaval Welcome Community Cafe The clerk provided a brief summary of the background to the request as detailed in Appendix 8. The Welcome Community Café is by far the largest and most successful Warm Hub operating in Seaton Valley. The only way to maintain the operation is to apply for grants to fill the deficit created by allowing residents to ‘pay as they please’.</p> |

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| | <p>There followed a detailed discussion on the pros and cons of a voluntary organisation generating sufficient income to cover its operating costs. At the end of the discussion, it was agreed that such organisations will only thrive with grants and support from a number of outside bodies.</p> <p>After considering the Clerk's report, the Council unanimously RESOLVED TO: Provide a £500 grant to the Welcome Community Café.</p> |
| CO028/23 | <p>13. Appointment of a new Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer The Chair welcomed Sarah Aldridge as the new Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer and reiterated that she and the current clerk have been working collaboratively over the last couple of weeks to support the transition. The new clerk's working hours remain the same and a working pattern will be agreed in the coming weeks.</p> <p>Council RESOLVED TO: Note the report and agreed to update the bank signatories i.e. remove Simon Potts and add Sarah Aldridge.</p> |
| CO029/23 | <p>14. Northumberland Town and Parish Charter Members agreed to receive and note the Northumberland Town, Parish and Community Council Charter.</p> |
| CO030/23 | <p>15. Annual Investment Strategy The Clerk presented his own report in Appendix 11 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>The clerk confirmed that the council currently has a short-term deposit account with Unity Trust Bank and a 35-day investment account with Santander.</p> <p>After considering the Clerk's report, Council RESOLVED TO: Receive and agree the Annual Investment Strategy attached as Appendix 11A to the clerk's report.</p> |
| CO031/23 | <p>16. Asset Register The Clerk presented his own report in Appendix 12 as well as the Councils' latest Asset Register in Appendix 12A, which identified all assets in Council ownership. Members asked a number of questions about specific assets and then:</p> <p>Council RESOLVED TO: approve the makeup of the Council's Asset Register attached as Appendix 12A to the Clerk's report.</p> |
| CO032/23 | <p>17. Risk Register The Clerk presented his report in Appendix 13, 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. The clerk drew attention to the medium risk that was added for transition to the new clerk, commenting that there is support in place to ensure continuity after his departure.</p> <p>After considering and discussing some of the risks identified Council: RESOLVED TO receive and approve the Risk Register attached as Appendix 13A to the Clerk's report and to encourage all members to take an active role in the Council's risk management processes.</p> |

| CO033/23 | <p>18. Bank Reconciliation as at 11 January 2023 Council agreed to receive the Clerk's report and noted that the balances on the Council's bank accounts had been reconciled to its financial records.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| CO034/23 | <p>19. Budgetary Control Estimated Outturn 2022-23 His report identified the main reasons for the under spend, all of which had been previously drawn to Council's attention.</p> <p>The Clerk's report showed the latest income and expenditure projections for the current year and highlighted any expected variances from budget. The updated net under spend after allowing for carry forward to 2023/24 is expected to be in the region of £63,000, due mainly to under spends on the partnership, bus shelter and youth services budgets, all of which had been previously drawn to Council's attention.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CO034/23 | <p>20. Dates of Future Scheduled Meetings</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">2022</th> <th style="width: 35%;">Committee/Council</th> <th style="width: 15%;">Time</th> <th style="width: 25%;">Venue</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Wednesday 26 April</td> <td>Full Council</td> <td>7pm</td> <td>Seaton Delaval Council Offices</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wednesday 24 May</td> <td>Annual Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting</td> <td>6.30pm</td> <td>New Hartley Memorial Hall</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | 2022 | Committee/Council | Time | Venue | Wednesday 26 April | Full Council | 7pm | Seaton Delaval Council Offices | Wednesday 24 May | Annual Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting | 6.30pm | New Hartley Memorial Hall |
| 2022 | Committee/Council | Time | Venue | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wednesday 26 April | Full Council | 7pm | Seaton Delaval Council Offices | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wednesday 24 May | Annual Meeting and Annual Parish Meeting | 6.30pm | New Hartley Memorial Hall | | | | | | | | | | |
| CO035/24 | <p>21. Any Other Business</p> <p>The Chair formally thanked Simon for his time as Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, in particular, his flexibility, fairness and calm throughout his tenure, which will be genuinely missed by the Seaton Valley area.</p> <p>Simon thanked Lorraine and the rest of the team for their support and hard work.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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

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| Signed by the Chair: | |
| Dated: | |