

SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES

Minutes of the proceedings of the **MARCH**
POLICY & RESOURCES of the **Council** held following the Monthly
meeting in the **Council Offices**, Advice & Information Centre,
Sedgefield, on **Monday 9th March 2015**.

Present **Cllr Gloria Wills (Chairman)**

Cllr Lynne Dentith (Vice Chairman) and

Cllrs Allan Blakemore, David Brown, Mark Cant, Mel Carr, Rebecca Hagan,
Tim Jeanes, Chris Lines, Ian Sutherland and Alf Walton

Officer **Dr Jane Ayre (Town Clerk)**

1. Apologies

Cllrs Vanessa Carmichael, John Robinson, Maxine Robinson, Dudley Waters.

2. Declaration of interest

None.

3. Matters of Information

3.1 Community Right to Bid:

**DCC have approved the Town Council's expression of interest in the Parish Hall
Car Park and agreed for this to be placed on the official register.**

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.2. Recycling Policy:

No further action has been undertaken with regard to this Policy. This will be progressed by Cllr Allan Blakemore and the Clerk when time allows.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.3. Registered STC Land:

Work is on-going in this area to draft a report for consideration by the Estates Working Group.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.4. PRS:

Discussions regarding this matter are on-going with the Estates Working Group.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.5. Potential Land For STC To Register:

Work is on-going in this area to draft a report for consideration by the Estates Working Group.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.6. SCA Lease:

A meeting is to be scheduled between Cllrs Wills, Dentith and the Clerk to consider Ms Hunter's feedback and then set up a meeting with the SCA to try and bring this matter to a swift conclusion to the satisfaction of both STC and the SCA. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

3.7. Public Participation:

Mrs and Mrs Scott are continuing to compile a copy of their evidence file in relation to Station Road Playing Field. They have recently requested the names of all Cllrs who have served on the Town Council between 1992 and 2008.

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to arrange an Open Spaces Working Group meeting once the evidence file is received from Mr and Mrs Scott.

3.8. Community Right to Bid – Consideration of Methodist Church Building:

The Clerk has written to the Methodist Church explaining the Community Right to Bid Scheme and why the Town Council would be interested in expressing an interest. The Methodist Council have been asked to notify the Town Council of any objections. Cllr Allan Blakemore reported that the next Methodist Council meeting is due to be held on Wednesday 11th March 2015.

RESOLVED:

Estates Working Group to keep P&R Committee informed of developments.

3.9. Draft Financial Regulations and Delegation Scheme:

Following Council approval the footers on both documents have been updated and entered onto the Council's Policies Log. The old Financial Regulations have been removed from the Council's website and the new Regulations uploaded.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.10. Sedgefield 1st Scouts:

The Terrace Hill funding for £15,000 has been released. The Finance Working Group are preparing a suitable monitoring process.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.11. Gardening Staffing:

The Gardening Supervisor's pay has been amended with effect from 10th February 2015.

The Personnel Committee will continue to consider future gardening staffing issues and bring subsequent recommendations back to P&R.

Parish Hall staffing was considered by the Personnel Committee on 2nd March 2015 and a report will be considered later in this meeting under agenda item 9.2.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

3.12. Parish Hall Heating:

Mr Paul Goodchild has now completed this work and gas safety checks have been successfully performed on both boilers.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information and to close this matter.

4. Public Participation

The Chairman, Cllr Gloria Wills, closed the meeting for the public to give views and comments. There were no members of the public. The meeting was then re-opened.

5. Reports

5.1 Terrace Hill Funding Update Report by Town Clerk

Prior to the meeting an Update Report by the Town Clerk had been circulated to all which detailed the current position of those organisations within the Town who had been allocated Terrace Hill money through the Large Grants Fund. Cllrs acknowledged that all organisations were making progress towards their defined projects and agreed that all should be granted an extension of 12 months. Cllr Ian Sutherland requested that consideration be given to Groups having a further extension after March 2016 if they could prove they were near to completion of their project. The Clerk explained that the original Terms and Conditions of the Large Grant Funds set by the Town Council had stated that if after an additional 12 month extension (taking up to 29th March 2016) no further extension would be granted and the Town Council would look to reallocate funding elsewhere. Cllr David Brown suggested that the Town Council contact all organisations in December 2015 asking for a further progress update on each project in order to determine whether the Council may wish to consider discussing amending the original Terms and Conditions.

RESOLVED:

- i) To receive the information in this report.**
- ii) To approve the requests of Sedgefield Bowling Club, Sedgefield Harriers,**

Sedgefield Out of School Fun Club and Sedgefield Squash Club to have a further 12 months extension to their Terrace Hill funding allocation through the Large Grants Pot.

- iii) The Clerk to write to Sedgefield Bowling Club, Sedgefield Harriers, Sedgefield Out of School Fun Club and Sedgefield Squash Club informing them their funding allocation offer has been extended until 29th March 2016.**
- iv) The Clerk to write to Sedgefield Bowling Club, Sedgefield Harriers, Sedgefield Out of School Fun Club and Sedgefield Squash Club in December 2016 asking for a further progress update in relation to their respective projects.**

5.2 Station Road Playing Field – Encroachment Update Report by Open Spaces Working Group

Prior to the meeting a report by the Open Spaces Working Group entitled “Station Road Playing Field – Encroachment Update” had been circulated to all. The report explained that due to the length of time which has elapsed since the building of Kent House the Town Council is not able to take any action against encroachment of access to the field. Upon this basis the Open Spaces Working Group recommended that the Town Council, through the P&R Committee, now consider whether it wishes to retain the lease with DCC for Station Road Playing Field.

Cllr Gloria Wills reported that the Playing Field is a significant financial burden for such a relatively small Town Council. Any decision regarding the future of the existing lease would not change the way in which residents use this Field. Cllr Mel Carr supported this view citing examples of recent costs relating to the maintenance of the Willows, however, he also commented that recently he has witnessed an increase in the number of children playing at the Field.

Cllr Chris Lines pointed out that even if the Field reverted back to DCC the Town Council would still continue to actively support residents in trying to resolve issues in relation to this area. Cllr Tim Jeanes stated that the Town Council is already supporting residents and has been for some time. Some of the issues being experienced by residents are not within the responsibility of the Town Council to address.

Cllr David Brown expressed his concern that if the Field reverted back to DCC there could be a danger that it would then be put up for sale. Several Cllrs expressed the

view that due to the restricted access to this site and the work currently being undertaken by residents to potentially register the area as Village Green they did not consider this likely. Cllr Allan Blakemore posed the scenario of the Field reverting back to DCC and them then not maintaining it. Several Cllrs then responded that in such an instance complaints would be reported back to DCC.

Cllr Mark Cant proposed, that based upon the content of the Update Report, the lease for Station Road Playing Field now be handed back to DCC. Cllr Gloria Wills seconded this proposal.

(Cllr Rebecca Hagan joined the meeting at this point)

RESOLVED:

The Clerk to write to DCC instructing them that the Town Council wishes to hand the lease for Station Road Playing Field back to DCC.

Note: Reports related to information exempt from the public are considered under agenda item 9.

6. Financial Matters

6.1 Monthly Accounts: Income (as at 2nd March 2015) / Expenditure (as at 2nd March 2015 minus unapproved cheques after 3rd February 2015)

RESOLVED:

The monthly accounts as had been circulated were approved for payment.

6.2 Cheques for approval after 3rd February 2015

Details of cheques for approval after 3rd February 2015 until 2nd March 2015 had been circulated to all Cllrs prior to the meeting. The Clerk circulated details of cheques for approval from 3rd – 9th March 2015. Cllr Alf Walton queried the invoice from Ripon Farm Services in relation to the servicing of gardening equipment. The Clerk explained that these costs are for the annual servicing of these items, work which cannot be done by the Gardening Supervisor without a dedicated workshop area from which to work.

RESOLVED:

All cheques were approved for payment and duly signed by Cllrs Wills, Dentith and Carr in addition to the Town Clerk.

6.3 Itemised Income Presented To Bank (period 3rd February – 2nd March 2015)

The itemized income presented to the bank as at 2nd March 2015 had been circulated to all prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

6.4 Draft Council Debt Policy Report by Finance Working Group

Prior to the meeting a “Draft Council Debt Policy Report” by the Finance Working Group had been circulated to all. The Working Group have been working on developing such a Policy based upon advice from the new Internal Auditor and this is a Policy required in accordance with the Council’s recently adopted Financial Regulations. When adopted this Policy will become a living document and will be under continuous review.

RESOLVED:

- i) To approve and adopt the DRAFT Council Debt Policy with immediate effect.**
- ii) The Clerk to update the footers to reflect this adoption by the P&R Committee.**
- iii) To update the Financial Regulations (section 9.4) to reflect the approval and adoption of the Council Debt Policy.**

6.5 Draft Corporate Risk Assessment by Finance Working Group

Prior to the meeting a Draft Corporate Risk Assessment by the Finance Working Group had been circulated to all. The Clerk explained that this Corporate Risk Assessment is the Council’s strategic assessment and that underneath this will sit the tactical/event specific risk assessments. The Finance Working Group have developed this based upon advice. When adopted this Corporate Risk Assessment will become a living document and will be under continuous review. Cllr Ian Sutherland thanked the Clerk for all her hard work on producing the recent financial policies and documentation.

RESOLVED:

- i) To approve and adopt the DRAFT Corporate Risk Assessment with immediate effect.**

- ii) The Clerk to update the footers to reflect this adoption by the P&R Committee.**

6.6 VAT Reclaims 2015/16 Report by Finance Working Group

Prior to the meeting a "VAT Reclaims 2015/16" Report by the Finance Working Group had been circulated to all. Historically the Town Council has reclaimed VAT once a year just after the end of the financial year. The Report was written following discussions with the newly appointed Internal Auditor regarding good practice to assist with cash flow.

RESOLVED:

From 1st April 2015 the Town Council to reclaim VAT on a 6 monthly basis, i.e. 1st October and 1st April.

6.7 Town Council Insurance Renewal Report by Town Clerk

Prior to the meeting the Clerk had circulated to all a Report relating to the Town Council's insurance renewal for 2015/16.

RESOLVED:

- i) To renew the Council's insurance policy with Zurich.**
- ii) To approve the payment of £5803.79 for this insurance renewal with immediate effect.**
- iii) The Council to undertake a competitive comparison exercise prior to the 2016/17 insurance renewal date.**

6.8 Trade Waste Renewal Report by Town Clerk

Prior to the meeting the Clerk had circulated to all a Report relating to the Town Council's renewal of its trade waste contracts with DCC.

RESOLVED:

- i) To renew all Trade Waste contracts with DCC for 2015/16.**
- ii) To approve the payments of £241 (re: Council Offices), £724 (re: Parish Hall) and £531 (re: Cemetery Lodge) for these contract renewals with immediate effect.**
- iii) The Council to undertake a competitive comparison exercise prior to the 2016/17 contract renewal date.**

6.9 Special Town Council Meeting to Approve 2014/15 Accounts Report by Finance Working Group

Prior to the meeting a Report by the Finance Working Group had been circulated to all. This Report proposed that a Special Meeting of the Town Council be held on Monday 20th April 2015 at 6pm to approve the Council's Annual Accounts prior to the Internal Audit taking place on 27th and 28th April 2015.

Cllr Mark Cant made Cllrs aware that he had suggested to the Clerk that those Cllrs who currently do not claim their Members Allowance may wish to request this money be placed into a 'central pot' for good causes. The Clerk explained that she had liaised with Mr Gordon Fletcher (Internal Audit) regarding this and Mr Steve Ragg (CDALC) to determine if there were any legal/financial issues which may stop such a proposal. This suggestion had been discussed at the Council's Finance Working Group meeting on 26th February 2015 when it was felt those Cllrs currently not accepting their Members Allowance could be impacted by tax implications. The Working Group had agreed that due to the current financial review work being undertaken this proposal would be put on hold until the end of the 2015/16 financial year for further consideration.

RESOLVED:

- i) To hold a Special Town Council Meeting on Monday 20th April 2015 at 6pm to approve the Council's Annual Accounts.**
- ii) To hold a Special P&R Meeting on Monday 16th March 2015 at 6.45pm to consider any additional invoices for payment prior to the 2014/15 year end as well as authorizing the grass cutting contract and work at Cemetery Lodge.**
- iii) To consider unclaimed Members Allowances at the end of the 2015/16 financial year.**

7. Training

7.1 "Your Region, Your Council, Your Future" Event by County Association of Local Councils from Cleveland, County Durham and Northumberland 28th March 2015

Prior to the meeting copies of a North East Region training event "Your Region, Your Council, Your Future" to be held on 28th March 2015 had been circulated to all. This is a free inaugural event at which the NALC and SLCC Chief Executives will be speaking about the new Local Council Award Scheme and CiLCA 2015.

RESOLVED:

- i) The Clerk to request places for herself plus Cllrs Ian Sutherland and Allan Blakemore.**
- ii) Any other Cllr wishing to attend to notify the Clerk who will book places accordingly.**

8. Correspondence

8.1 Request for CAB Donation (email from Neil Bradbury dated 26th February 2015)

Prior to the meeting copies of an email from Neil Bradbury, Chief Executive of Citizens Advice County Durham dated 26th February 2015 had been circulated to all. Mr Bradbury was requesting a financial donation from the Town Council towards the cost of maintaining the fortnightly CAB drop-in sessions in Sedgefield.

It was agreed that the service provided by CAB within Sedgefield, as well as across the County, is extremely important. The Clerk confirmed that drop-in sessions within the Town Council Offices are well attended with many people calling in at other times during the week being referred to either the drop-in session at Trimdon or the telephone help-line.

RESOLVED:

To make a donation of £1,250 to the CAB with a covering letter explaining in addition to this financial donation the Town Council will continue to provide an office rent free for each fortnightly drop-in session.

(Cllr Tim Jeanes left the meeting at this point)

8.2 Durham Association Newsletter February 2015

Prior to the meeting copies of the February 2015 "Durham Association Newsletter" had been circulated to all.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

8.3 Woodland, Old Durham Road, Sedgefield (letter by Mr Ean Parsons dated 19th February 2015)

Prior to the meeting copies of a letter from Mr Ean Parsons dated 19th February 2015

detailing his concerns regarding usage of woodland on Old Durham Road had been circulated to all. The Clerk reported that this matter has already been referred to DCC for their investigation and comment. The Clerk to keep Cllrs informed regarding this matter.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

8.4. NALC Announcement of New Star Councils Awards 2015 (email dated 2nd March 2015)

The Clerk circulated to all Cllrs an email from Mr Steve Ragg dated 2nd March 2015 detailing NALC's new Star Councils Awards for 2015. The Award categories cover individual achievement (Young Councillor of the Year; Clerk of the Year; Councillor of the Year; Chair of the Year; Council Worker of the Year) and specific achievement (Digital Communications of the Year; CALC outstanding project of the Year; Local Council outstanding project of the Year; Council of the Year). Councils have until 30th June 2015 to make their nominations.

RESOLVED:

To receive this information.

9. Consideration of Reports Exempt From Public

Cllr Wills explained that due to the confidential nature of the following items these would be discussed under Exempt Information and as such members of the press and public were requested to leave the meeting (Section 1 Sub Section (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960).

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.37p.m.

SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL POLICY & RESOURCES
MEETING

Minutes of the proceedings of the **MARCH SPECIAL
POLICY & RESOURCES MEETING** of the **Council**
held at **6.45 pm** in the **Council Offices**, Advice &
Information Centre, Sedgefield, on
Monday 16th March 2015.

Present **Cllr. Gloria Wills (Chairman) and**
 Cllrs. Allan Blakemore, Mark Cant, Mel Carr, Ian Sutherland, Alf Walton and
 Dudley Waters

Officer Dr. Jane Ayre (Town Clerk)

1. Apologies

Cllrs David Brown, Vanessa Carmichael, Lynne Dentith, Rebecca Hagan, Tim
Janes, Chris Lines, John Robinson, Maxine Robinson

2. Approval of Grass Cutting Contract 2015/16

The Clerk reported that at the Environment Committee meeting held on 16th February 2015 the grass cutting contract for 2015/16 had been discussed. The Clerk had requested a revised quotation from CE & CM Walker in relation to Sedgefield Cemetery to determine the potential additional costs for:

- a) increasing the frequency of cuts in Sedgefield Cemetery to weekly with the contractor using the same equipment as in 2014/15;
- b) keeping the same frequency of cuts in Sedgefield Cemetery as in 2014/15 but using smaller machinery with collection boxes to retain the grass cuttings.

(Cllr Alf Walton joined the meeting at this point)

Following a site meeting CE & CM Walker had confirmed that option b was not possible due to the size of their machinery and the layout of the cemetery. They had submitted additional costings based upon option a. The Clerk circulated to all a paper summarizing the 2014/15 budgeted maximum, minimum and actual grass cutting expenditure and the 2015/16 budgeted maximum and minimum grass cutting expenditure along with the maximum and minimum additional costs for the

extra cutting at Sedgefield Cemetery. Cllr Allan Blakemore questioned if the length of the grass at the Cemetery was the cause of the recent problems which residents had complained about. The Clerk reported that this matter had been discussed at length between the Estates Working Group and the Gardening Supervisor and it was felt that increasing the frequency of cuts in the cemetery during the grass growing season should resolve the problem, however, this would be monitored over the coming year to ensure that it did achieve this. Cllr Dudley Waters asked for clarification on the areas to have additional grass cutting. The Clerk replied that only Sedgefield Cemetery would be subject to additional grass cutting, i.e. double the number of cuts of last year, however, this would be at the discretion of the grass cutter awarded the contract as weather conditions would also be a factor hence a maximum and minimum budgeted allocation.

Cllr Alf Walton suggested that it would be beneficial to remind CE & CM Walker Ltd of the need to take care when undertaking strimming work around headstones to ensure none are damaged. Cllrs agreed this was a good idea.

RESOLVED:

- i) To appoint CE & CM Walker Ltd as the Council's Grass Cutting Contractor for 2015/16 based upon the quotations submitted.**
- ii) To remind CE & CM Walker Ltd of the need to take care when strimming around headstones and memorials in the cemetery.**
- iii) A further competitive tendering process to be undertaken for the 2016/17 grass cutting season based upon the Town Council providing a detailed specification of its needs**

3. Cemetery Lodge Update

The Clerk informed Cllrs that at the January 2015 Environment Committee quotations for interior and exterior decorating at Cemetery Lodge had been considered and a contractor appointed (refer to item 9.1 and 9.2 in the minutes of that meeting). When reviewing the Council's Delegation Scheme this should have been a recommendation brought to P&R Committee for approval. This was duly noted by Cllrs.

The Clerk and Cllr Mel Carr reported that interior painting work has now been completed, inspected, invoice received and payment made (as per the P&R Committee approval on 9th March 2015). Work is now well underway to complete the painting of the property's exterior. A meeting was held between the Clerk, the

Gardening Supervisor and Cllrs Mel Carr and Alf Walton with Ms Amanda Wainwright of Dowens Estate Agents on 3rd March 2015 to view the property and explain the areas for letting and the areas to be retained/used by the Town Council. Ms Wainwright believed the property could obtain £700 per calendar month. As soon as the exterior paintwork is completed an appointment will be made with Dowens to photograph the property and commence the letting process. Cllr Gloria Wills requested that a stipulation be put into the tenancy agreement to ensure the fireplace in the front room of the property is protected. The Clerk to keep Cllrs updated on this matter.

RESOLVED:

To approve the recommendation contained in Minute 9.1 and 9.2 of the Environment Committee meeting held on 19th January 2015.

4. Cheques for approval after 10th March 2015

The Clerk circulated to all Cllrs details of cheques requiring approval for payment since 10th March 2015. The Clerk explained that cheque numbers 100153 and 100154 related to the Mayor's Charity Account in relation to the recent Mayor's Charity Ball.

Cllr questioned the cheque number 108241 which was for an invoice from Fairhurst in relation to the Sedgefield Plan. Cllrs agreed not to pay this invoice until further information was obtained from Fairhursts and presented in a paper at the next P&R Committee.

RESOLVED:

All cheques, with the exception of that relating to Fairhurst, were approved for payment and duly signed by Cllrs Wills and Waters in addition to the Town Clerk.

The Clerk circulated to all Cllrs a copy of a letter received from Mrs Nancy Wells of the Sedgefield Twinning Association (dated 12th March 2015) requesting the Town Council's donation of £200 towards the June 2015 visit from the Town's German Twinning Partners. The Clerk pointed out to Cllrs that at the November 2014 P&R Committee meeting it had been agreed to make an allocation of £200 in the Council's 2015/16 Budget for this event. After further consideration Cllrs agreed that a donation of £200 should be issued to the Twinning Association with immediate effect.

RESOLVED:

A cheque for £200 be issued to the Sedgefield Twinning Association.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.00p.m.