

TOW LAW TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING – 21ST FEBRUARY 2006

PRESENT : **Councillor T.Batson** **(Chairman)**

**Councillors J.Flynn, A.Green, R.Grogan, E.Gwynnette,
E.A.Morris, C.Rand & J.Stevens**

Councillor C.Hayton – Wear Valley District Council

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE :

**Councillors J.Day, J.Gale & P.Graham
County Councillor T.Carroll**

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST :

There were no declarations to report

3. POLICE REPORT :

The Chairman welcomed P.C.Jeff Blair to the meeting to present his first report as the newly appointed beat officer for the area. P.C.Blair produced the crime and incident figures for February in printed form, and these were distributed to members. He reported that in connection with the five burglaries from dwellings over a two day period, two arrests had been made, and that the remainder of the month had been relatively quiet.

4. PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF H.J.BANKS :

The Chairman welcomed Mark Dowdall and Justin Hancock from H.J.Banks who had asked to attend the meeting to discuss with members a proposal to seek planning permission for a residential development to the north, east and south of their headquarters and to the north of Pennine View. Mr.Dowdall explained that the proposal marked a diversification from their normal business of open cast mining and the provision of sustainable energy sources, and was in line with their recent policy to develop brown field sites especially in former mining areas. An informal meeting with planning officers at Wear Valley District Council had already taken place, and a public consultation exercise was about to take place, initially in the immediate locality and then as far as the Smith Street/Ironworks Road junction. Additionally, a small exhibition was planned for the Community Centre.

Mr.Hancock explained that the current plan involved a development of around 30 mixed units, although regard would need to be taken of the District Council's housing allocation as determined by the Regional Spatial Strategy. He was unable at this stage to confirm that the project included bungalows, or whether there would be a mix of affordable housing. It was felt that the development as proposed would provide an attractive feature at the entrance to Tow Law and would help towards the continuing sustainability of the town vis-



The Chairman emphasised that the Town Council encouraged development, both domestic and industrial, and he suggested that given the fact that the town's boundaries were very tightly drawn, any extension might be useful in this connection.

A short question and answer session followed, and at the request of the Chairman, it was

Agreed : That the Town Council agree in principle with the proposal submitted by the Banks' representatives.

5. REPRESENTATIONS BY RESIDENTS :

There were no residents in attendance

6. MINUTES :

Agreed : That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on Tuesday 17th January 2006 (a copy of which had been sent previously to each member) be Approved and Signed as a correct record.

7. COMMITTEE REPORT :

Agreed : That the Report of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Tuesday 7th February 2006 (a copy of which had been sent previously to each member) be Approved and that the recommendations therein be Confirmed and Adopted.

8. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT :

County Councillor Carroll was not in attendance

9. DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS :

a) Councillor R.Grogan

Councillor Grogan reported that following the success of the visit in 2005 of the Wellness Centre's mobile unit, a further visit to the town would be made in June/July for a ten week period. In connection with the future of the recreation centre, he reported that tenders for the feasibility study were imminent. As far as the proposed children's centres were concerned, there seemed to be modest support for the schools to remain open for longer hours, though the Millennium Primary School had expressed an interest.

b) Councillor C.Havton Councillor Hayton reported as follows :

i) Wear Valley District Council had embarked on the re-organisation of its departmental structure.

ii) The District Council's element of Council Tax for the 2006/7 financial year had



- iii) The District Council was in the process of providing larger wheely bins for household refuse, and that the programme would alternate with a fortnightly collection of recycling material.

10. CASUAL VACANCY :

The Clerk reported that there had not been the required level of demand for a poll to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of former Councillor Andrew Lawton and accordingly, it was

Agreed : That the vacancy be advertised across the town by public notice.

11. AUDIT — 2004/5 FINANCIAL YEAR :

The Clerk reported that the Council's external Auditors had completed the audit for the 2004/5 financial year, and that there had been no matters of concern to bring to members' notice. Accordingly, it was

Agreed : That the report be Noted and the Annual Financial Return be formally Approved.

12. TOW LAW AUCTION RING :

The Clerk reported that together with Councillor Grogan, he had met with Ross Cowling, Regeneration Officer at Wear Valley District Council and Brian Harris, Conservation Officer at Durham County Council. The two officers had formed the opinion that given the physical condition of the building and the lack of any significant community support for its retention, there seemed to be no merit in pursuing the matter further. Accordingly, it was

Agreed : That no further action be taken in this matter and that the developers be advised of this decision, with a view to seeking the de-listing of the building's Grade 11 status and its demolition.

13. LAND AT TOW LAW :

The Clerk reported that the transfer of this land from Durham County Council to the Town Council was on the point of completion, and he submitted invoices from the County Council and the Town Council's Solicitors in respect of their fees. Concern was expressed at the level of the County Council's fees, and the Clerk was instructed to pursue the matter further.

(At this stage Councillor A.Green left the meeting)

14. ROYAL GARDEN PARTIES 2006 :

The Clerk reported receipt from the National Association of Local Councils and the County Durham Association of an invitation to member Councils to nominate their Chairmen and spouses to attend a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on 18th July.

Agreed : That Councillor T.Batson be nominated for consideration in this respect.

- 2005/2006/037 -

15. H.M. THE QUEEN'S 80' BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS :

The Clerk reported receipt of correspondence from NALC in this respect. It was the intention that any celebrations should be of a low key nature, and a number of suggestions were made.

Agreed : That efforts be made for the bells of St.Philip & St.James Church to be rung to mark the Queen's birthday on 21st April.

16. PLANNING MATTERS :

The following new applications were Noted without comment :

- a) Proposed 3 bedroom detached house at 47 Valley Rise for McInerney Homes
- b) Proposed detached house on land adjoining Northside Court for I.Robson

The following approvals were Noted :

- a) Erection of potting shed at 3 Fellside Close
- b) 4 bedroom detached house at Plot No.2 Naismith Mews
- c) Siting of pouch box on land west of 90 Dan's Castle
- d) Siting of pouch box on land north of 25 Castle Bank

17. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT :

Agreed : That Approval be given to the payment of Invoices Nos. 051 to 056 in the sum of £2851.11 as itemised on the Agenda.

18. COMMUNITY FUND :

The Clerk submitted applications made jointly by the two primary schools to fund the production of a colour community activities newsletter which is distributed to the families of all pupils. The application was for the sum of £ 100 for each school. The Clerk advised that at this stage of the financial year, only £100 remained available for distribution, and it was

Agreed : That a payment of £50 be made to each school on this occasion.

19. MILLENNIUM GREEN — TRUSTEESHIP :

Councillor Flynn as Chairman of the Millennium Green Trust suggested that in the light of current circumstances, the Town Council might consider taking on the role of Corporate Trustee, and it was

Agreed : That consideration of this matter be delegated to the Finance & General Purposes Committee for report and recommendation.

20. DOG FOULING :

Further consideration was given to this problem, and the Clerk reported having investigated the situation regarding the District Council's dog warden service. A new warden was now in post, and details of the contact telephone number were circulated to members so that notification of nuisance "hot spots" could be passed on quickly. The report was Noted.

21. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT : The

Chairman had no report to present

22. CLERK'S REPORTS :


The Clerk had no further reports to present

23. MEMBERS' REPORTS : There

were no reports to present

24. DATE OF NEXT MEETING :

It was Noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Council would be held on Tuesday 21' March 2006 at 7 p.m.

Signed  Chairman

21' March 2006