

TOW LAW TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING - 16th JANUARY 2007 PRESENT :

Councillor T.Batson

(Chairman)

**Councillors A.Blacker J.Day, J.Flynn, J.Gale, P.Graham,
A.Green, R.Grogan, E.Morris, G.C. Stevens J.Stevens.**

District Councillor C.Hayton & County Councillor T.Carroll

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE :

Councillor A.Gwynnette

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST :

There were no Declarations to report

3 POLICE REPORT :

P.C.Jeff Blair presented the monthly Crime & Incident statistics for December 2006, which indicated a marginal reduction over previous periods. A member reported a number of anti-social behaviour incidents at her home, which had resulted in extensive damage. Discussion again ranged over the merits of the provision of a youth shelter in the community, but opinion was divided over the likely benefits. P.C.Blair advised that funding had been received for a further two community support officers, though their actual operational area had not so far been clarified. He also reported that the position with the bank building was being monitored as an absentee landlord situation, while Councillor Grogan advised that he was seeking support for a compulsory purchase.

During the discussion, it was suggested that the Town Council might become more pro-active, and P.C.Blair wondered whether the Community Association might initiate an "open door" policy which would offer the services of its staff and facilities to assist any youngsters keen to participate. The Chairman interjected to suggest that Councillor A.Blacker might take a leading role in this, and act as a liaison with the Police.

In closing the Police report, the Clerk reported that Friday 2nd March had been provisionally earmarked for the public meeting with the Police and with Hilary Armstrong M.P in attendance. The meeting would be held in the Community Centre, and was expected to begin at 6.30 p.m

4. REPRESENTATIONS BY RESIDENTS :

There were no residents in attendance.

5. MINUTES :

Agreed : That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st November 2006 (a copy of which had been sent previously to each member) be Approved and Signed as a correct record, subject to the addition in Minute No.17 of a Garden Competition and a Window Display



6. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT :

County Councillor Carroll presented a brief report in which he advised that the planning application by U.K.Coal for the extraction of coal and fireclay from the site at Park Wall, would be heard by the County Council in April or May. He pointed out that a previous similar application had been rejected on appeal. County Councillor Carroll advised the meeting that the protocol for the collection and disposal of litter in the county was for the District Councils to collect and dispose, but that the County Council would meet the cost.

7. DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS :

a) Councillor C.Hayton

Councillor Hayton reported that the District Council was engaged in the preparation of its 2007/2008 Budget. Early indications were that the increase in Council Tax would be around 3% He also reported that the implications of the Local Government White Paper were being considered, with the possibility that the ratio of councillors to electors would be reduced to 1:4500. This would mean that Tow Law would be represented by 1 member rather than the present 3.

b) Councillor R Grogan

Councillor Grogan reported that good progress was being made with the preparations to re-house the WOW gymnastic equipment in the recreation centre. The Constitution of the Management body would be signed on 22nd January, and the facility would be formally opened on 8th February.

He also felt that a further approach should be made to the County Council to seek the regeneration funding which had been promised by Government at the time of the Foot & Mouth outbreak in 2001.

c) Councillor J. Gale

Councillor Gale reported that the funding for the gymnasium equipment at the recreation centre would come from the District Council's General Fund rather from Section 106 as previously expected. This meant that Section 106 money, and possible grant aid from Home Housing could be released to carry out the resurfacing of the multi-games area. He further reported that the District Council had indicated that it would prefer a stone built shelter at the former Cattle Mart stop, but that he would press for a newer glass shelter so as to discourage young people from loitering out of sight and intimidating passers-by.

8. APPOINTMENT OF CLERK TO THE COUNCIL :

The Chairman and the Clerk reported jointly on the interviews which had been conducted to appoint a successor to the retiring Clerk. Three candidates had been interviewed and it was

Recommended : That Mr.Geoff Smith of 11 Bamburgh Road, Newton Hall, Durham, be appointed to the post of Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to the Town Council with effect from 1st February 2007, on incremental point 22 of Salary Scale 18-22 of the National Conditions of Service agreed jointly by the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks. Hours of duty would be 15 per week.

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The Chairman informed members that Mr.Smith was currently employed by Esh Parish Council, also for 15 hours per week, and wished to retain this position, which was carried out on four mornings each week. He proposed to be in the Tow Law office from Monday to Thursday between 1.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.. He was in possession of the C1LCA qualification, which was an essential requirement to achieving Quality Status for his employing authority, and was currently engaged in preparing the formal application for this status for Esh Parish. A formal application would subsequently be submitted on behalf of Tow Law Town Council should the relevant criteria be fulfilled

Following the Chairman's report, it was

Agreed : That the appointment of Mr.Smith on the basis set out in the Recommendation be Approved and Confirmed

9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER :

The meeting considered as Appendix 1 the report of the Clerk on the contents of the White Paper and its possible implications for Town & Parish Councils, and the benefits which were expected to accrue to local communities. The Chairman further reported on a meeting which he had attended at County Hall, at which the White Paper were discussed.

The reports were Noted.

10. PLANNING MATTERS :

The following new application was considered by the District Council's Development Control Committee on 4th January 2007, when approval was recommended subject to various conditions :

"Proposed 6 No. three storey terraced dwellings at former factory at Campbell Street"

Other new applications :

- a) Proposed shed to rear yard and loft extension with dormer window to rear at 4 Harrison Street for Mr.RJohnson.
- b) Proposed erection of 2 storage buildings and enclosure for heat treatment kiln at Bond's Foundry, North Road.
- c) Proposed stable and granary conversion to residential accommodation at Sandy Can Farm, Wolsingham Road, for Mr.W.Love (re-submission).
- d) Proposed flat with garage below at 4 High Street for Mr.I.Anderson.
- e) Proposed Park Wall North surface mine coal and fireclay scheme near Tow Law for U.K.Coal Mining Ltd.

Agreed : a) That applications (a) — (d) be supported

b) That in respect of application (e) an initial response be made to Durham County Council indicating that a more detailed and considered submission would be made at a later date.

11. ACOUNTS FOR PAYMENT :

Agreed : That Approval be given to the payment of Invoices Nos. 035 -049 in the sum of £ 4746.89

12. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ;

The Chairman had no report to present.

13. CLERK'S REPORTS :

The Clerk had no reports to present.

14. MEMBERS' REPORTS :

A member suggested that some consideration might be given to the possible assumption by the Town Council, of responsibility for the management of the Millennium Green, for which funding might be available through the organisation Natural England.

Agreed : That this item be placed on the Agenda for discussion at the February meeting.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING :

It was Noted that the next meeting of the Council would be held on Tuesday 20th February 2007 at the new time of 6.30 p.m.

Signed

..... **Chairman**

20th February 2007