

# NEWBROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 2<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2011

06-03-1 **Present:** Cllrs H Forster (Chairman), R S Robson, E L Dixon, P J Johnston, M D Newson and M W Gibson.

**Also Present:** Clerk: R Macfarlane

### 06-03-2 **Apologies:** I D Knights and NCC Cllr E Heslop & PC D Kidd

The Chairman asked the Clerk to write to Cllr Heslop and offer him the Council's best wishes and a speedy recovery from his present ill health.

### 06-03-3 **Declaration of Interest:**

Cllr Newson –matters relating to the Tyne River Trust

06-03-4 **Minutes:** The Minutes of the Meeting of Newbrough PC which was held on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2011 with amendment to 05-01-8 were approved by Council then signed by the Chairman.

### 06-03-5 **Matters Arising:**

Complaint against Councillor In answer to councillor's questions the Clerk stated that he was prompted to pursue a complaint to the Standards Board after Cllr Johnston had accused his fellow councillors of misleading the Auditors. After discussing the matter with the Chairman the Clerk has not progressed the complaint.

**NCC Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting** The Chairman gave thanks to Cllr Knights for the detailed report of the Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held at Stannington on 25<sup>th</sup> January. The Clerk has e-mailed copies to all Councillors.

### 06-03-6 PUBLIC FIRST FOCUS:

No issues

### 06-03-7 **Improving the Ecology of Newbrough Burn**

Cllr Newson gave a report of the well-attended meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> February. It is proposed to improve the weir structure to facilitate the passage of fish such as salmon and trout. This will be an affordable scheme that will tastefully balance the historic and ecological aspects of the project to European standards. The Council were pleased that the scheme was supported by Defra, the County Council, the land-owners and Newbrough First School. Cllr Gibson proposed and Cllr Robson seconded that Newbrough Parish Council support the Tyne River Trust Habitat Improvement Scheme for Newbrough Burn. The proposal was unanimously carried.

### 06-03-8 **The Equality Act**

The Clerk has been making enquiries as to how the new Act will affect Parish Councils. NCC is looking into the matter and NALC/CAN will provide some training.

## 06-03-9 COMMUNICATIONS

The Great Poppy Party Weekend 10<sup>th</sup> June, Sustainable Community Strategy for Northumberland (RM) Big Society 13<sup>th</sup> February, NCC Provision of Local Services and 2011/12 budget, NCC Area Committee meeting 15<sup>th</sup> January.

**(A) BDO AUDIT BRIEFING – RESERVES SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT BUT NOT EXCESSIVE, THE EXPENDITURE LIMITS FOR S137 FOR 2011/12 ARE £6.44 PER ELECTOR, EACH ASSET OWNED BY THE BODY SHOULD BE RECORDED ON THE ASSET REGISTER AT ITS ORIGINAL PURCHASE COST.**

**(b) Bottle Bank at Cricket Ground** – This facility is still being abused; litter and rubbish have been dumped by the Bottle Bank.

**(c) Council Insurance** – This due on 1<sup>st</sup> June – Clerk to review premiums

### 06-03-10 **Roads**

Several roads in the area were identified as being in need of urgent repair, especially opposite the farm at East Fourstones, back road to Whinney Hill, the road past the Paper Mill, Church Lane and Thornton Tower Road. Flooding has been evident after the recent heavy rainfall. Cllr Newson volunteered to record information appertaining to excess water build-up after rainfall.

06-03-11 **Footpaths** – No issues.

06-03-12 **Planning** – No planning matters.

## 06-03-13 **REPORTS**

**Town Hall:** The present occupants of WI House are leaving so it is available to lease. The Management Committee have set up a limited company with Company House, to operate the bar, Newbrough Trading Ltd and to manage, a company called Newbrough Town Hall. The pantomime was another great success. The naming of rooms is now in progress and the Town Hall Committee is inviting suggestions for suitable names for individual rooms.

**Village Society:** Nothing to report

**Angling Club:** It has been a very pleasing year for fishing and the legal issue of ownership of the disputed stretch should be resolved soon.

**Newbrough CofE First School:** There is a governors meeting next week.

**Sportsfield Association:** The Association has just bought a lawn mower to cut the wicket and out-field. They are looking for grant aid (MTCT) and need ideas for raising income.

**Northumberland County Council:** no report

06-03-14 **Future Policies**

# THE CLERK WILL PREPARE FURTHER INFORMATION FOR THE FOLLOWING POLICIES: **VEXATIOUS COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

**Councillor Allowance Policy** – To come into force after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011

06-03-15 **Review of Financial Regulations**

Cllr Johnston expressed personal concern over a number of issues relating to this document. It was proposed by Cllr Gibson and seconded by Cllr Dixon that the current Financial Regulations Document (previously approved and adopted in November 2009) should be RE-APPROVED.

Cllr Newson was confident that as a “smaller body” Newbrough PC has put in place appropriate arrangements to ensure the proper conduct of the Council’s financial affairs, and the Council has monitored the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements in practice. It was RESOLVED that Newbrough’s accounts are prepared in accordance with the Council’s statutory responsibilities, and the Council has maintained an adequate system of internal audit of accounting records and control systems.

The Council thanked Cllr Newson for producing a grid comparing and contrasting the adopted Newbrough regulations with those outlined in the NALC Model. The public accountability framework encourages openness and transparency from local councils by requiring that the annual return and external audit reports are made public. The Clerk will continue to make available to local taxpayers internal audit and other third party reports. By having all the Council’s policies and documentation published on the Council’s website Newbrough Parish Council demonstrates commitment to inclusiveness, openness and transparency.

## 06-03-16 **INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW**

Cllr Johnston expressed personal concern over a number of issues relating to this review pointing out that he was in possession of the Practitioner’s Guide. The Clerk commented that he was very familiar with the guide and the Internal Audit has always been in line with Audit Commission guidelines, as well as incorporating advice and guidance from BDO and has always been endorsed and approved by the External Auditors.

Cllr Newson proposed and Cllr Dixon seconded the motion to accept the terms of reference for internal audit. These were APPROVED by full council. It was noted that the Internal Audit work takes into account both the council’s risk assessment and wider internal control arrangements. It was RESOLVED that the internal auditor is sufficiently independent, unbiased and objective and is

competent to carry out the audit. The relevant responsibilities of members, Clerk and Internal Auditor were defined and the annual audit plan demonstrates how audit work will provide assurance for the council's Annual Governance Statement. Once the Clerk receives dates from BDO he will publish a timetable of when the audit will take place along with reporting dates. The Clerk reported that the Council has to approve the Accounting Statement by 30<sup>th</sup> June

#### 06-03-17 **Standing Orders**

Cllr Newson proposed and Cllr Dixon seconded the motion to ADOPT the standing orders currently published on the Council's website of which hard copies were given to councillors in November. These standing orders have been adapted, to suit Newbrough's needs, and are based around a Model produced by NALC.

#### 06-03-18 **Risk Management**

After a proposal from Cllr Newson which was seconded by Cllr Dixon, it was RESOLVED to re-approve the current Risk Management Document.

#### 06-03-19 **Assets**

The Assets Register was APPROVED by Council and signed by the Chairman. Following recent advice from Auditors DDO values attached to all assets will reflect (where possible) purchase prices and these will remain so until disposed of.

#### 06-03-20 **Finances**

Bank Accounts 1<sup>st</sup> March BMM £11732.49 Community £1219.23

All payments are approved and within budget, no significant variation and no bank reconciliation needed.

#### Payments Approved

Clerk's Part Salary £427.70, Clerk's Expenses £40.86 (£38.53 plus vat £2.33), Meeting Room Rental £30 (March) and Grant Aid to the Newbrough Youth Project £600

Total £1098.56

#### LGA1972 Section 137 Spending

The Clerk noted that s137 spending for this current financial year was as follows:-

Royal British Legion £50, GNAA £150, Tynedale Hospice £50 and Victim Support £50.

Next meeting 7.00 pm Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> May

The meeting closed at 8.45