

**Billingham Town Council
Minutes of Town Council Meeting**

**Tuesday 21st April 2009
6.30 pm,
Council Chamber, Billingham**

- Present:** **Councillor Mike Smith (Chairman)**
Councillors; Helen Atkinson, Jane Dobson, James Dickinson,
Alan Gallimore, Ray McCall, Ann McCoy, Eleanor Mockler, Jean
O'Donnell Colin Pollard, Sue Skilbeck, Paul Smith, Mick Stoker
- Apologies:** Apologies were received from, Councillors; Olive Milner &
Sharon Scott
- Official:** Dianne Rickaby – Town Clerk
- In Attendance:** Neil Schneider Chief Executive Stockton Borough Council

310/09 NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

311/09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were submitted from Councillors: Olive Milner &
Sharon Scott.

312/09 CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair asked if there were any declarations of interests.

No declarations were made.

313/09

NEIL SCHNEIDER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF STOCKTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Neil informed members that following his recent appointment to the post of Chief Executive at Stockton Borough Council he was looking forward to working closely with local Town Councils to capture the energy, creativity and innovation within the Borough. Neil stated that there had already been open dialogue with the Chairman and Town Clerk/ Responsible Finance Officer with regular meetings. Neil wishes to build on the energy and enthusiasm already displayed by the Town Council in a partnership approach with the Borough. Also to build on working relationships with the Town Council and the regeneration of Billingham. Neil stated that he is hoping to look at local opportunities and maximise the potential. However he stated that it is important to take criticism as if it is valid as the Borough need to know how to put this right.

A Question & Answers forum was opened to members.

Councillor Skilbeck stated that she had recently contacted an officer within the Borough on behalf of the residents. The person who answered the telephone was unsure that she was a Councillor for Billingham Town Council.

The Town Clerk stated that she would forward an up to date list of Town Council members to Neil so that links can be developed.

Councillor Pollard asked if the Borough had a policy on Devolving Powers to Parish Councils for the benefit of delivering flexible local services. Councillor Pollard stated that this was something that had been devolved in Durham and Newton Aycliffe.

Neil stated that there may be a particular reason for this due to outcomes not being delivered in certain areas.

Councillor Atkinson raised some concerns by residents in the Wolviston Court area of Billingham in respect of weed killing.

Neil stated that he would speak to the Environment department about this issue once he had specifics from the Town Clerk on this matter.

Councillor McCall wanted to express his thanks to the Care for Your Area team who have completed a fantastic job in tidying the area of New Road in Billingham.

Councillor Smith raised concerns in respect of bird fouling on telephone poles within several areas in Billingham. He stated that he had contacted Care for Your Area however they have stated that they are unable to assist as the poles are not council property. He informed members that the telecommunication companies have stated that they do not clean their poles of bird foul.

Neil stated that he will pursue this issue as the poles need cleaning and he will come back to members with an answer.

The Chairman asked Neil to give an update on the regeneration of Billingham Town Centre.

Neil stated that Stockland the developer are committed to the redevelopment of Billingham Town Centre. This can only be enhanced with the £30 million for the Integrated Health Service project. Due to the current economic climate Stockland have been faced with a number of pressures. However a series of positive and encouraging discussions have recently been held with Stockland regarding the future regeneration of Billingham Town Centre. A master plan is expected to be outlined in the summer and Stockland have been in discussions with anchor outlets. It is expected that the regeneration of Billingham can be accelerated.

Councillor Atkinson stated that she felt that there is a lack of attention to the current Town Centre. She felt that the Borough needs to look at the here and now. The play area has been vandalised and needs repair. Councillor Atkinson felt it would also be reassuring for the public if boards advertising the regeneration of the Town Centre could be placed within the Town. Neil stated that he appreciates that members of the public are frustrated and want to see the regeneration.

Councillor Dobson stated that there is a general feeling within the Town that the regeneration is not going to happen. The Chairman informed members that he had spoken with Neil and Louise McDonald, Regeneration Manager about the possibility of displaying notice boards with information about the regeneration for the public within a couple of empty shops in the Town. Councillor O'Donnell stated that the regeneration will not happen overnight and will take time.

Neil informed members that with trends of human behaviour the Borough see the Town Centre more that just a shopping area but also a meeting place.

Councillor Dobson expressed concerns in respect of current traders within the Town Centre and the passing trade when the Forum closes. Councillor McCoy stated the possibility of a market similar to Stockton to entice people into the Town.

Neil stated that he had spoken to Stockton Borough Council Development team to look at ways for people to go into the Town Centre. They had discussed a number of events to encourage sport although some not sport related.

Councillor Skilbeck stated that if pictures of what the Town Centre will look like could be displayed this would promote positivity towards the regeneration.

The Clerk stated that she had spoken to Ian Hirst, Manager of the Town Centre in respect of repairs. The Clerk advised that ongoing discussions take place with Louise McDonald in supplying extra activities for youngsters when the Forum closes for its refurbishment.

Neil was thanked for his attendance. The Clerk advised she would be meeting with Neil on Thursday 23 April 2009 on behalf of the Town Council to discuss current issues.

At this point councillor Stoker left the meeting.

314/09 MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 17th MARCH 2009

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Town Council meeting on the 17th March 2009.

It was resolved:

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

315/09 MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman raised an issue in respect of item **301/09 FIN27/09** – the Chairman asked members if they approved of the minute stating that no one member would have autonomy to approve the spend of the Town Council budget.

It was agreed that this would be discussed in item 11 of the agenda.

Councillor Paul Smith asked if there is any progress on the overgrown pathway at Mill Lane/New Road.

The Clerk stated that she had made some enquiries into ownership of the land. The Clerk advised that the land is owned by a number of bodies i.e. leisure, residents and highways. Therefore it was agreed to undertake a site visit with Councillor Smith.

Councillor Pollard raised concerns in respect of item **293/09 Train Station**

Councillor Pollard stated in his opinion he thought that the Town Councils recommendations in principle in discussions with Richard McGuckin at the meeting were not deemed as confidential. He asked why a separate report is being attached to the minutes marked confidential. As the decision took by the Town Council is not mentioned in the minutes.

The Chairman stated had he been at the last meeting he would have asked Richard McGuckin to take it to public consultation as to what they feel about the station. Councillor Pollard stated that the ultimate decision will not be the Town Councils. However the matter of no disabled access must be addressed with all urgency.

The Clerk advised that as the meeting was closed to the public and press at the request of Richard McGuckin the information available to public is restricted until such time Stockton Borough Council indicated it can be released.

It was resolved:

The Clerk will speak to Richard McGuckin about the report.

316/09 MINUTES OF THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 7th APRIL 2009.

Consideration was given to the recommendations from the minutes of the Development Committee on 7th April 2009.

It was resolved:

The minutes were accepted as a true record of proceedings and the recommendations made by the Committee are to be accepted.

317/09

MATTERS ARISING - From the minutes of the Development Committee on the 7th April 2009.

Newsletter

The Clerk advised that following a meeting with Unique Distribution a Service Level Agreement and been drawn up outlining the Town Council's expectations.

Following completion of distribution a report has been received from Unique detailing addresses that have not received a copy of the Town Councils newsletter with a valid reason as to why these addresses were not delivered to. Following spot checks being carried out we are pleased to report that problem areas have been delivered to.

Councillor Mc Coy stated item **DC50/09 Summer/Christmas** stated that the Mayor should be invited to the Christmas event as the Town Council is part of the Borough.

The Chairman raised an issue in respect of item **DC50/09** regarding the Summer/Christmas event discussions by the Committee and recommendations to hold one big event and this should be a Christmas event.

The Chairman expressed his concerns that the Town Council has publicised a summer event within the newsletter. The Chairman proposed to members that the Town Council consider sponsoring/helping the Billingham Charity Trophy event on 5 July 2009 which brings the Town together and various organisations such as the rugby club, football club and Billingham Harriers through sport. The Chairman stated that this is a non profit making event. Funds are raised to the run the event and what comes in goes out. Any profits made on the event go to a nominated charity. This year's event is to raise funds for the National Society of Epilepsy.

The Chair of the Finance Committee stated that the Town Council has already made a recommendation at the Finance Committee to make a donation to the event of £250. Also support has been given to various other summer projects within Billingham i.e. Billingham Carnival, Greenwood Road and Folklore Festival.

The members discussed the proposal and the possibility of a presence at the Billingham Trophy event. Councillor Paul Smith, Ray McCall and Jean O'Donnell offered assistance with the event. Also discussion took place around the possibility of providing a trophy for the event or sponsoring a marquee.

The Chairman asked members to take a vote on how the Town Council could assist with the Billingham Charity Trophy. Options discussed included a bigger donation to the event, presence at the event, voluntary time to help organise the event or youth provision.

Discussions took place and it was proposed that this item is to go to the next Development Committee on 14 May 2009.

The Clerk advised that she has a meeting with Mark Telford, Integrated Youth Services Manager, Stockton Borough Council to discuss summer activities and if the Town Council can assist with youth provision within the Town.

It was resolved:

The trophy event to be discussed at the next Development Committee on 14 May 2009.

At this point the Councillor Mike Smith, Councillor Mockler and Councillor Paul Smith left the meeting.

The meeting was then chaired by Councillor Sue Skilbeck (Vice Chair)

318/09 MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE HELD ON 14TH APRIL 2009

Consideration was given to the recommendations from the minutes of the Environmental Committee on 14th April 2009.

It was resolved:

The minutes were accepted as a true record of proceedings and the recommendations made by the Committee are to be accepted.

319/09 MATTERS ARISING – From the minutes of the Environment Committee on 14th April 2009.

There were no matters arising from the Environment Committee.

320/09 MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 7th APRIL & 20th APRIL 2009.

Consideration was given to the recommendations from the minutes of the Finance Committee on 7th April & 20th April 2009.

It was resolved:

The minutes were accepted as a true record of proceedings and the recommendations made by the Committee are to be accepted.

321/09 MATTERS ARISING – From the minutes of the Finance Committee on 7th April & 20th April 2009.

The Clerk advised that within the minutes of the meeting on 20th April 2009 item **FIN42/09** she is currently looking at policies to be implemented by the Town Council. The Standing Orders indicates that no one member is allowed the authority to approve expenditure without the full Town Council consent.

The Clerk advised members that Standing Order 54 states “where it is necessary to make a payment before it has been authorised by the Council such payment shall be certified as to its correctness and urgency by the appropriate Officer. Such payment shall be authorised by the Committee, if, any, have in charge of the business to which it relates, or by the proper Officer for payment gives the approval of the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Council”.

The Clerk advised that should the Town Council wish to amend the authority of spend the Standing Order must be changed to reflect this. This would supersede authority previously given by the Council to the Chairman.

The Clerk advised that any payment above £1000 is to be in consultation with the Finance Committee and ratified at Full Town Council.

Members discussed this Standing Order and agreed it be amended to reflect the authority of spend and to be re-adopted at the Annual General Meeting on 19th May 2009.

It was resolved:

Standing Order 54 (2) of the Town Council Standing Orders be amended to reflect the authority of spend.

The Clerks spend authority to be increased to £1000 per item is amended as per revised Standing Order 54 (2).

Councillor O'Donnell expressed her disappointment in respect of item **FIN41/09 Donations** and the decline of the donation request from Billingham Partnership. This was in respect of the Town Council being a third party funder for the external boundary fence at the Clarence's. Councillor O'Donnell stated that within the local Council services and powers we should be supporting and providing allotments.

At this point Councillor McCall raised a non prejudicial interest in the Clarence's, being an active member on various bodies within Clarence's and his disappointment at the decision.

Councillor McCoy advised members that the Partnership may be able to contact SITA to act as a third party funder. She stated that SITA have previously donated monies to the Clarence's.

Councillor Pollard stated that the Finance Committee had discussed the request at great length and felt that it was too large a request for the Town Council funds.

322/09

CLERKS REPORT

The Clerk advised members that a number of policies need to be implemented this year. She has currently been working on revising a number of policies particularly the financial policies. Draft copies of the following policies have been produced and will be circulated to members for review and to be adopted (if approved) at the AGM on 19th May 2009:

Financial Regulations

Review of internal/external review

Publications model (for adoption)

Donation Policy

The Clerk informed members that the draft Model Publication Policy, and Donations Policy were presented at the Finance meeting on 20th April 2009. Members discussed the policies and recommended that the Town Council accepts the policies.

The Clerk asked for members to ratify these policies. Members agreed to ratify the policies.

The Clerk advised members of her meeting with Neil Schnedier on Thursday 23rd April 2009 and advised members to contact her should they have any issues for her to discuss with Neil.

The Clerk advised members that she currently sits on the Community Newspaper working group with Councillor Sharon Scott. The group have approached the Clerk to be Treasurer. The Clerk stated that she is seeking approval from members to carry out this role. Members approved this proposal.

It was resolved:

The Clerks report is accepted.

The Model Publication and Donations policy is accepted.

Members approve the Clerk's role of Treasurer for the Community Newspaper.

323/09

FINANCE

The members considered the monthly Schedule of Accounts previously circulated.

The Clerk advised that she had received an invoice from Unique distribution for £833 in respect of leaflet distribution of the Town Councils newsletter.

It was resolved:

The monthly accounts are accepted for payment.

The invoice for Unique distribution is approved.

324/09

REGNERATION MATTERS

The Clerk gave members a general update, and asked if there were any questions around regeneration.

It was resolved:

The Clerks update is accepted.

325/09 PLANNING

The planning application report (previously circulated) was reviewed/discussed by members.

Application number 09/0416/FUL - Councillor Mockler had raised concerns on this application and enquired if the land that is being built on is in the blast zone (exclusion zone) and should the Council be allowing building on this land.

The Clerk advised members that she had looked into this further and had been advised by planning at Stockton Borough Council that the request is to vary the site and add some garages. The house site has already been approved and therefore falls within the regulations and is not in an exclusion zone.

It was resolved:

The planning applications are approved.

326/09 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public were present at the meeting.

327/09 CORRESPONDENCE

The Clerk advised members of the following correspondence.

- Letter from Butterwick Hospice thanking the Town Council for the donation of £103 raised from the Christmas event.
- Email from Katie Cormack, Planning Enforcement Officer at Stockton Borough Council in respect of the kiosk within the Town Centre. The approved use for the Kiosk in planning terms is A1 which includes sandwich shops. A sandwich shop is permitted to serve hot food (jacket potatoes, warm sandwiches, soup) example this would be considered ancillary to the main permitted use – sandwich shop, and would not require a change of use application.

Therefore there is no breach of planning control and we are unable to take any action under the planning legislation.

328/09 OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Alan Gallimore raised an issue in respect of a number of homeless people within Billingham and the fact that the Town does not have a hostel.

It was agreed that the Clerk invite Tristar homes to a future meeting Town Council meeting.

329/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is **Tuesday 19 May 2009** (Annual Parish Meeting and annual General Meeting) time to be advised.

There being no further business the meeting was closed.

Signed.....
Chairman to Billingham Town Council