

**MINUTES of the FULL COUNCIL of STANLEY TOWN COUNCIL held at
The Greenhouse, Greencroft Business Centre on Tuesday 28th November 2023 at
6.30pm**

O Milburn*	L Ferry	D Tully**	G Binney	H Clark
A Clegg§	S McMahon	C Hampson	J Stephenson	C Marshall
A Hanson	M Thompson			

* Chairman § Vice-Chairman

OFFICERS:	Dianne Rickaby	(Locum Town Clerk)
	James Harper	(Environment Services Team Leader - ESTL)
	Alex Ferry	(Events & Administration Support Officer)

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.
Members observed a minute's silence to show their respects to Alderman Jack Pallas a former Town and District councilor who has sadly passed away.

96/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Members **RECEIVED** apologies from Cllrs. J McMahon, J Nicholson, K Wilson and A Jones. Cllrs C Bell, D Fall, J Kane, and M Martin were absent.

**Cllr. D Tully attended via Teams.

97/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr C Marshall declared an interest in item 14 of the agenda - Events Proposal Report.

98/23 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Town Mayor reminded members of the Community Carol Service being held at St Andrews Church, Stanley on Sunday 17th December at 4pm, and encouraged members to attend.

99/23 LEADER'S STATEMENT

There is no update from the Leader of the Council.

100/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were present, and no questions had been received in advance.

It is noted that the surgery held prior to tonight's meeting has been utilised by a resident.

101/23 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the Ordinary Full Meeting of 24th October 2023 are **APPROVED** as a true record by all members.

Minutes signed by Town Mayor Cllr. O Milburn.

102/23 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT & BANK RECONCILIATION

It was proposed by Cllr. A Hanson and seconded by Cllr. S McMahon to **APPROVE** the Schedule of Payments and Receipts and **NOTE** the Bank Reconciliation & Bank Balances for October 2023.

And the subscription to council clerks.

Members received a verbal update from Locum Town Clerk in reference to a Time Keeping machine brought in by previous Town Clerk from a company called Isgus UK. The machine itself is not being utilised currently. The Locum Town Clerk summarised the costs involved with this under the current contract with STC are paying for. The company has quoted an exit fee, the potential saving is £5,358. Locum Town Clerk request council members to decide if we should continue with the contract or exit the contract and cut out losses.

Council **AGREED** to cancel and exit the contract with Isgus UK.

103/23 LOCUM CLERK UPDATE

Update received to council from Locum Town Clerk, which was circulated with Agenda, points to be discussed further at budget meeting.

In addition, it was noted by Locum Town Clerk that some quotes had been received for updating the STC website which would be discussed further at the budget meeting and LTC will circulate some further information. The STC website needs updating for April 2024. The current support is doing the best they can with the current platform.

A meeting was held with Aspire regarding the server and the current contract held with Aspire. The current contract still has 2-3 years left, and the exit cost would be £17,000. A positive discussion took place about reducing our monthly charges. A saving has been made of £230 p/m by changing the internet provider.

A quote of £1,517.98 was received to complete the transfer work on the server. It was proposed by Cllr. S McMahon and seconded by Cllr. A Hanson to **APPROVE** the setting up of a new server and data transfer costs.

104/23 REPORT FROM DCC and PARTNERSHIP GROUPS

All members **AGREED** for item 10 and 11 from the agenda to be included on Full Council agendas going forward.

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105/23 BUDGET WORKING GROUP

Council **RECEIVED** the following update from the Budget Working Group for the 2024/25 financial year.

“Budget workshop went ahead on Tuesday 7 November 2023 and initial discussions took place.

The meeting produced some good conversations between Councillors and Officers around partnership working, community engagement, and the new Allotment Service. It was clear from discussions that communication was a key element to our future success in delivering our priorities, which officers believe to be achievable with the proposed staffing structure. All Councillors have been issued with a complete set of papers that were available at the workshop via e-mail on 8 November 2023 along with the comments and observations captured.

An ordinary meeting has been called for Tuesday 12th December 2023 in which further discussion will take place to set a balanced budget prior to the deadline for submitting our precept demand on 19 January 2024. I would urge all Councillors who are unable to attend the next meeting to submit their thoughts for consideration in advance of the meeting.”

It was noted that the budget working group met to look at 2024/25 budget, and the information was circulated to all members.

Cllr. C Marshall – Points to be noted

DCC leadership have made clear they will be increasing the precept by 3%, which will increase the pressure on families.

We are being forced to take on the allotments, it was a decision previously made by the County Council that the town council would not be forced to take on the allotments. This is a large resource to manage, to staff and implement new strategies.

Stanley Town Council are in a difficult position because if we don't fund the new costs which we are being forced to take on by the county council, that is going to be a significant cut to our budget.

Which will inhibit any aspirations we have for delivering enhanced services in the town.

At a time, we know national government will not fund a regeneration of the front street. We have not received any funding in the 2 or 3rd round of levelling up fund. The Town Council has a big role to play in the future of the town. If we are not careful, we will not have any money to do anything.

If Durham County Council don't change their mind, we will have no choice but to pass that whole cost onto the taxpayer via our precept setting.

106/23 ALLOTMENTS

Council **RECEIVED** an update from the ESTL on the timeline for taking over the allotments.

107/23 EVENTS PROPOSAL REPORT

Locum Town Clerk circulated the itinerary for the Christmas Lights switch on.

Council **RECEIVED** a presentation from the Events Working Group proposing the benefits of an In-House Events program.

Council members **APPROVED** the proposal to bring council events in house.

The council would like to extend their thanks to Scott and the team at AH Events for the support on delivering the events program.

Cllr. C Marshall abstained from decision on this approval.

108/23 NORTHUMBERLAND IN BLOOM

Members to **RECEIVED** a presentation from Environmental Services Team Leader.

Stanley achieved Gold Standard in the Northumbria in Bloom competition, which is a huge achievement and something the town council have worked hard to attain.

109/23 ASSEST LIST REPORT

Members **AGREED** to accept the report, the new format presented for a full comprehensive Inventory list and the proposal outlined under priorities to move this important piece of work forward.

Cllr. J Stephenson, on behalf of Stanley Town Council, would like to pass on thanks to Ann Barry for the work which has gone into creating this report and accompanying register, which has taken a great amount of effort to compile.

110/23 DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday **23rd January 2024** at **6.30pm**; Tantobie Community Hall, DH9 9TJ.

(Councilor Surgery will be held by Cllrs. Olga Milburn, Helen Clark & David Tully at 5:30pm)

Members **NOTED** the verbal update for the office closure over the Christmas period, which is from 22nd December 2023 and reopening on Tuesday 2nd January 2024.

111/23 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Council **RESOLVED** that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. Justification for excluding the public and press from consideration of the following item: Staffing confidentiality.

Streaming and recording of the meeting was stopped at this point.

Justification of excluding the public and press for the consideration of the following items in Part B as discussion falls under the Data Protection Act 2018.

PART B**112/23 HR COMMITTEE****Chief Officer Recruitment Update**

There were two candidates shortlisted who attended a recruitment day, and the HR Committee have recommended an appointment for the Chief Officer role at Stanley Town Council.

It was proposed by Cllr C Hampson, and seconded by Cllr S McMahon, that council **ACCEPT** the recommendation from the HR Committee to offer the position to the interviewed candidate.

113/23 CIVIC HALL UPDATE

Verbal update received from the Locum Town Clerk on the condition of the Civic Hall.

SIGNED



Cllr Olga Milburn
STC Town Mayor