

NORTH TAWTON TOWN COUNCIL

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Minutes of the North Tawton Town Council Extra-Ordinary Meeting held via Zoom on: Tuesday 5th January 2021 at 7.15 pm.

Present: Cllr Whiteley (Chair) Cllr Trew hitt (Vice-Chair) Cllr Testa Cllr Kennedy
Cllr Gray Cllr Davies Cllr Burrow Cllr Hodge
Cllr Lee Cllr K Drake Cllr Watson
Melanie Bickell, Assistant Town Clerk
WDBC Cllr Ratcliffe, 2 members of public

1. Apologies for Absence

All members present.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations received.

3. NTTC Climate Questionnaire

3.1 Background

Members declared a climate emergency in December 2019, a questionnaire was devised to garner the views of residents.

3.2 Councillors response to the results of the questionnaires

Cllr Whiteley thanked everyone involved in the project and for bringing the information before the Council. It was noted that only 5% of the population of North Tawton had responded to the questionnaire and members agreed a lot more focused public consultation was required when circumstances allowed.

4. Specific proposals

4.1 Members considered the suggestions as set out in items 5 – 8 of this agenda.

4.2 Members considered the limited public response in terms of the percentage of residents who returned questionnaires and whilst the responses can be regarded as a starting point for consideration, the Council agreed it has not been given a clear remit for any specific suggestion or proposal, and this should particularly be considered for items where expenditure is necessary.

5. Items to be delegated to the Nature Working Group

5.1 More wildflower areas

Cllr Gray Proposed that that the Nature Group engage in detail with residents and local businesses (including farms) to seek opportunities for this across the parish, undertake research as to successful similar projects in other parishes, and if it appears viable bring a report with specific costed actions back to the Council for consideration. Seconded by Cllr Testa, all in favour and Resolved.

Action – Nature Group

Cllr Trew hitt Proposed that NTTC set a budget of £300 for purchase of seed and seed packets that can be distributed to all homes in the parish to allow small areas to be sown in gardens, with the Nature Group looking to involve children and organisations, and NTTC to investigate grants that may be available, seconded by Cllr Davies, all in favour and Resolved (*Budget provision – Town enhancement – flowers/Christmas trees – Power LGA 1972 s.137 – improvement of appearance of town*)

Action – Nature Group

5.2 Less churchyard mowing

5.2.1 Background

At its meeting in September 2020 the Council approved for the Nature Group to consult the Rector of St Peter's Church, Rev. Nick Weldon, regarding a proposal to reduce mowing in some areas of the churchyard to allow wildflower areas to flourish.

5.2.2 History

Several years ago, the Council agreed to leave an unmown strip along the Eastern boundary of the churchyard with a view to encouraging a wildflower area. Unfortunately, this resulted in growth of weeds and brambles which took over the area in question.

5.2.3 Possible objections

The Clerk is aware of a couple of nearby parishes where an exercise of either benign neglect or planting of wildflower areas was implemented. The opinion of the communities was split between support for wildflowers on one hand, and those who perceived the policy to be in effect a neglect of their historic family graves on the other.

5.2.4 Actions

The Nature Group to put forward suitable proposals to be discussed with the Rector and consider older areas of the churchyard and parish cemetery which could undergo similar treatment with little likelihood of objection from parishioners and bring a report back to the Council in March with specific costed actions for consideration. It will be necessary to liaise closely with the Council's grass cutting contractor.

Action – Nature Group

5.3 Garden sharing for produce.

Cllr Davies proposed that the Nature Group take this project forward and obtain expressions of interest via the 'Roundabout', Social media and council website, and bring definitive proposals back before the Council at the April meeting, seconded by Cllr Whiteley, all in favour and Resolved.

Action – Nature Group

5.4 Litter picking/taking responsibility for wilder spaces.

Some research is required to put forward suitable proposals for the Council to consider, therefore this item will be postponed until the Council's Ordinary Meeting in February.

5.5 Education and facilitating

Members agreed that this initiative is COVID-19 dependent in terms of actual meetings, but information on some of these issues can be included on the council's website.

Actions

The Town Clerk has some relevant information and knowledge and will undertake this part of the task.

Assistant clerk to input WDBC link to how to work out carbon footprint to NTTC website.
Clerks to provide limited information and advice with the Council's monthly Roundabout article.

Cllr Testa Proposed 2-3 Cllrs get together to look at how this can be progressed and liaise with Sampford Courtenay and bring back to March pcm, seconded by Cllr Gray, all in favour and Resolved. Cllrs Testa, Gray and Kennedy volunteered to progress.

Action – Cllrs Testa, Gray and Kennedy to progress for March pcm.

6. Items to be delegated to the Council's Traffic & Parking Working group

6.1 Public Transport

6.1.1 Buses – Cllr Testa Proposed that the Traffic & Parking Group be delegated to open discussions/lobby with relevant bodies/parties regarding the provision of new bus services for North Tawton with direct links to Okehampton, without making any commitments about NTTC level of support, seconded by Cllr Gray, all in favour and Resolved.

Action – Traffic & Parking Group

6.1.2 Reinstatement of trains from Okehampton to Exeter, and possible reopening of NT station is due to go ahead – awaiting final approvals.

Cllr Testa proposed that the Traffic & Parking Group liaise with Oke-Rail, DCC, County Cllr McInnes and our MP to investigate what actions the Council can

reasonably take to support this project, in liaison with the Clerks as to what powers the Council has in this regard as well as what can be more appropriately and effectively done by other organisations or individuals, seconded by Cllr Gray, all in favour and Resolved.

Action – Traffic & Parking Group

6.2 Electric Cars

6.2.1 Electric charging points – NTTC may need to work with DCC and others to enable a network of charge points to be installed over the longer term. Members agreed that the Council continue to keep this matter on a longer-term agenda but take no action at this time.

6.2.2 Car Share – Cllr Testa proposed that the Traffic & Parking Group investigate the possibility of a local car sharing scheme for residents – to include Electric Car-Share, and report back to Council later, seconded by Cllr Davies, all in favour and Resolved.

Action – Traffic & Parking Group

7. Other items

7.1 Recycling bins alongside litter bins in public spaces, especially the Park – The Town Clerk was asked to contact WDBC to find out if this would be a possibility. WDBC have responded and advised that, where this has been trialled, unfortunately people have used the recycling bins for general refuse as well, so it has not been feasible to introduce such a scheme. Members agreed to monitor this situation before considering further options.

7.2 Working with other local parishes who have declared a climate emergency/are working on a climate plan – Cllr Gray Proposed that the Nature Group contact other local parishes, and the Clerks obtain information from WDBC and report to Council at April Meeting, seconded by Cllr Davies, all in favour and Resolved.

Action – Nature Group and Clerks

7.3 Drainage – members considered if it was necessary to investigate what else can be done to keep drains clear over and above DCC Highways clearing of all drains on an annual basis, NTTC paying to have the drains cleared by a commercial company on an annual basis, (next due Spring 2021), and the Town Lengths man clearing of certain drains as required.

Action – Assistant clerk to liaise with Highways and County Cllr McInnes with regards to their drainage policy for the Highway surface water

7.4 Creation of a community orchard/growing space requiring land purchase/rental. Cllr Testa Proposed that the Estates Committee and Cemetery Working Group explore the acquisition of a suitable piece of land for a community orchard or sectioning a suitable piece of land in the cemetery extension and explore within the wider community with landowners for use of land as a community orchard, seconded by Cllr Gray, all in favour and Resolved.

Action – Estates Committee and Cemetery Working Group

7.5 Reduce length of time that streetlights are on – Cllr Davies Proposed that the Clerks make enquiries with DCC Highways Street Lighting Department as to how agreement on a reduced lighting period is reached and find out what actions the Council needs to take. A report will be brought back to a future meeting of the Council with a view to a wider consultation, seconded by Cllr Testa, 10 in favour, 1 abstention and Resolved.

Action – Clerks

8. Further Consultation with Residents

The Council to review how best to take this forward in the short and longer term, following receipt of all reports from working groups and Clerks. Timescale April meeting.

Action - Town Clerk to feedback to residents in the Roundabout and Council website what the council have decided to take forward and what needs more consultation and research.

9. Further proposed actions by the Council

9.1 Cllr Trehitt Proposed that NTTC consider all council activity in light of its impact on the climate with the intention of seeking only to approve activity that does not contribute to the climate emergency, therefore, all future agendas to carry a standing item to monitor each item against the impact on climate change, seconded by Cllr Testa, all in favour and Resolved.
Action – Clerks to include as a standing agenda item.

9.2 Cllr Davies Proposed that NTTC sign up to the Devon Climate Declaration, seconded by Cllr Trehitt, all in favour and Resolved.
(<https://www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/devon-climate-declaration/>)

Action – Assistant Town Clerk

10. **Okerail – lobbying for support for a local station and improved bus service**

Approved under Item 6.1.1 and 6.1.2.

11. **Questions/Comments from members of the public**

The meeting shall be suspended to allow members of the public to comment/ask a question on any **AGENDA ITEM ONLY – PLEASE QUOTE AGENDA ITEM NUMBER**. Time is limited to 2 minutes per person, up to a maximum of 3 persons, unless the Chairman rules otherwise. A brief record of any points made will be included in the minutes of that meeting.

8.57pm Chair Closed the meeting

It was suggested by a member of the public that NTTC consider the publication of its own bi-monthly newsletter to inform residents of Council activities – to be carried forward to 11th January agenda.

9.05pm Chair reopened the meeting.

12. **Date of next meeting**

The next Ordinary Meeting of the Town Council shall be **Monday 11 January 2021** at 7.15 pm unless otherwise notified.

Meeting closed 9.06pm