

NORTH TAWTON TOWN COUNCIL

Town Clerk - Mrs Sarah Say
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Assistant Town Clerk – Mrs Mel Bickell
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You are hereby summoned to the Ordinary Meeting of North Tawton Town Council to be held via Zoom on: **Tuesday 2nd March 2021 at 7.00 pm** – please refer to the information below re remote meetings – this meeting will be a remote meeting and attendees, including members of the public, should start logging on to Zoom from 6.45 pm to allow the Open Forum section of the meeting to commence at 7.00.

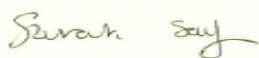
Please note: To allow Local Authorities to function during the Covid-19 emergency, the Government has now issued legislation which, amongst other provisions, allows Councils to hold meetings remotely using appropriate technology. NTTC has decided that its meetings will be held remotely until further notice and has adopted the use of Zoom Conferencing software for this purpose.

[Join Zoom Meeting](#) Meeting ID: 836 9566 3424

Members of the Public are welcome to join the meeting if they have suitable equipment to log onto Zoom. Any personal data provided in this connection will be held securely and will be destroyed by 1 April 2021 or at any time as requested by the person concerned.

Members of the public wishing to join the remote meeting can request to join – you need a Zoom account, and when you request to 'join a meeting' the reference number you need is 836 9566 3424. For security you will be kept in a virtual 'waiting room' until you are admitted to the meeting. The rules for a virtual meeting are the same as for a live meeting in relation to any disruptive behaviour, ie the ability to remove users from the meeting. Background screens and uploading of documents will be disabled.

If you have any problem logging onto the meeting please telephone 01837 880121 for advice (phone diverted to Town Clerk when office closed).



Town Clerk

AGENDA

An opportunity for the Electors and others to address the Town Council.

The Council encourages the use of an Open forum. This will allow Members of the Public to address the Town Council. Members of the public wishing to speak in the Open Forum should notify the Clerk 7 days prior to the meeting. If appropriate an item will be placed on a future agenda. A brief note will be made of any discussion at this point. Please note that Councillors are not obliged to give their opinion or answer questions. The maximum time allowable for the Open Forum at this meeting will be up to 45 minutes, at the discretion of the Chairman.

Open Forum

South Hams and West Devon Playing Pitch Strategy - Jacky Bennet of Belap, consultants working with South Hams and West Devon Councils

South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council are currently preparing a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), assessing whether there is sufficient provision throughout their areas for the sports of football, cricket, rugby, hockey, and other pitch sports (such as rounders) into the foreseeable future. Belap are the consultants carrying out this work and wish to discuss with NTTC the projects and aspirations involving playing fields within North Tawton.

1. **Apologies for Absence** - To receive apologies from Councillors unable to attend.
2. **Declarations of Interest** - Councillors are invited to declare any personal or disclosable pecuniary interests, including the nature and extent of such interests they may have in any items to be considered at this meeting.

If Councillors have any questions relating to predetermination, bias or interests in items on this Agenda, then please contact the Clerk in the first instance.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meetings

- 3.1. To approve the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Monday 2 February 2021

4. Updates - for the purpose of remote meetings, only important updates which cannot be postponed are required.

4.1. Chairman to update the Council on various issues.

4.2. Update on the NT Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Trehitt

4.2.1. Members to consider approving additional printing of the full Neighbourhood Plan Document

4.3. Update from Estates Committee meeting held 25th February 2021 – Cllr Trehitt

4.4. Update from Finance Committee – Cllr Davies

4.5. Update from Section 106 Monitoring Group

4.6. Update from Section 106 Arts Group

4.7. Update from Personnel Advisory Group

4.7.1. NTTC Personnel Policies - NTTC need to review some of the personnel policies, particularly complaints, disciplinary and grievance and appraisal policy.

Councillors are asked to agree that the Personnel advisory committee undertake this in conjunction with the clerks and bring back to April meeting for approval.

4.8. Update from Den Brook Community Fund

4.9. Update from Parking and Traffic Group

4.10. Update from North Tawton Nature Group – Cllr Testa

4.11. Update from WDBC from Cllr Ms. Lois Samuel and Cllr Ratcliffe.

4.12. Update from DCC from Cllr McInnes

5. Ongoing issues

'Action Log' – this will be updated and circulated in due course.

6. Consultations/Newsletters/Invitations

6.1. National Planning Policy Framework proposed changes consultation (ends 27th March 2021)

Members are required to consider and approve any NTTC formal response to the consultation.

The Government has announced a raft of proposed changes to national planning rules in England. These include requiring that at least 10% of new homes in major housing developments should be affordable; tightening the rules about building isolated homes in the open countryside; greater protection for trees and historic statues and plaques; clarifying that neighbourhood plans can allocate large sites and new transport tests and requirements.

In particular, there is a focus on promoting '*well-designed, beautiful and safe places*' including a new requirement that '*development that is not well designed should be refused*'.

Linked to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework, the Government has announced a consultation on a New National Model Design Code, which '*provides detailed guidance on the production of design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design*'.

Further information about the proposed changes to the NPPF and the new National Model Design Code [can be found on the Government website here](#).

7. Climate Information and Education

7.1. Background – The Council's Nature Group was asked to look at ways of progressing this issue.

7.2. Report of the Nature Group – Councillor members of the Nature Group have produced a report with suggestions as to how to progress this matter.

7.3. Proposal – it is suggested that the Council consider delegation of this project to the Council's Nature Group to take forward in liaison with Sampford Courtenay Parish Council, and that any financial implications be brought to the Council for approval as and when necessary

Refer to report of Cllr R Testa 'Climate education and facilitation', also available on website

8. Dedicated webpage or website for information on wildlife and wildlife gardening.

8.1. The Council's Nature Group have proposed a dedicated website (at no cost) OR alternatively a dedicated webpage on the Council's website for specific information on wildlife/wildlife gardening.

8.2. When the Council's website was set up, the 'tree' included a 'Your Community' section, with pages for Climate Change and for Nature & Environment. It is the recommendation of the Town Clerk that the proposal take the form of a webpage on the existing NTTC site, with an option to have a separate tab for climate and nature issues. This keeps the responsibility for maintenance, storage and security of the website within one place, already being paid for by the Council. The Nature Group will take responsibility for producing the content of these dedicated areas of the website.

9. Working with other councils on Climate Emergency issues

Following feedback from other local Town and Parish Councils the Nature Group proposes that NTTC look to work with them to convene a regular meeting (perhaps twice a year) of two representatives from each council to discuss common themes and ways to work together on climate emergency issues. Other councils would need to agree to this. It is suggested that the Nature Group be asked to liaise with appropriate representatives from WDBC, Okehampton Town Council, and other local councils, and report back to NTTC in due course.

10. Wildlife and land management

The Nature Group would very much like to see a volunteer group set up in North Tawton that could assist with various elements of our wildlife management. This could include clearing brambles in the churchyard, looking after the memorial garden by Taw Bridge, clearing the cut long grass after the wildflower areas are mown in September, and any other relevant initiatives. It is suggested that responsibility for setting this up, including addressing any necessary H&S issues, insurance implications, possible grant funding, etc, be devolved to the Nature Group, with a timetable for the first work session to be circulated to all councillors once everything is in place (group volunteering should not happen until COVID19 restrictions permit it to be done safely). The Nature Group will keep Members advised as to compliance with all relevant issues.

11. NTTC Co-option of Councillors Policy & Procedure

Members to consider the suggested policy & procedure and decide as to whether to adopt the policy as it stands or suggest required amendments further to which the policy would be adopted.

Councillors resolved on 11th January 2021 that NTTC retain appendix c and look at some of the accountabilities but not to use it to judge people against and that parts of Appendix A should be optional to fill in or the applicant be given the opportunity to speak at a co-option meeting if they prefer.

The Town Clerk has been liaising with WDBC Elections office with regards to the wording of EU residents and this matter requires further lawful clarification and will be subject of a future amendment once resolved. *Refer to proposed co-option policy circulated with February agenda, also on website*

12. NTTC Internal Control Policy.

Members are asked to consider the revised and updated Internal Control Policy approved in March 2020, and to approve the amended policy. If there are any further suggested alterations these should be agreed, and the policy approved on condition that the further amendments are incorporated.

13. Responsible Financial Officer Role – Proposal to appoint Assistant Clerk as RFO

13.1. Background – The Town Clerk, Mrs Sarah Say, is currently the Council's appointed Responsible Financial Officer. The responsible financial officer (RFO) is the officer appointed under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, who is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The RFO, whilst often the Clerk, can be another officer of the council.

The Assistant Clerk, Melanie Bickell, has considerably more experience as RFO, whereas the Town Clerk does not have similar background financial experience.

The Town Clerk has been happy to undertake the role of RFO, and has successfully met all the relevant requirements and targets, including those of the internal and external audit.

However, it would make sense for the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk to divide duties according to their individual strengths, and to that end the possibility of the Assistant Clerk taking on the role of RFO has been informally discussed since the time of Mrs Bickell's appointment.

13.2. Proposal – With the agreement of the Assistant Clerk, the Town Clerk recommends that Melanie Bickell be appointed as the Council's RFO with effect from 1 April 2021. As members are aware, the two roles mirror each other closely, and the Town Clerk will continue to liaise with the Assistant Clerk and cover the duties of the RFO post when necessary.

13.3. Financial Implication – The role of RFO carries considerable responsibility and the Town Clerk's

current spinal column point LC2 Scp 27 reflects this.

The Clerk and Assistant Clerk are in agreement that from 1st April 2021, it is recommended that the Town Clerk's salary should go down by one spinal column point to LC2 Scp 26 upon giving up the RFO role, and the Assistant Clerk's salary, upon taking on the RFO role, should go up by one spinal column point to LC2 Scp 25. The net effect of this would be a very small cost saving and therefore reduction in the salary cost to the Council for both posts, in the sum of £0.04p per hour.

13.4. Recommendation – it is suggested that Members vote on a suitable proposal as to the transfer of the RFO post, and the salary spinal column points as set out in 10.2 and 10.3 above.

14. Memorial Application for Approval – Diana Jones

An application has been received for the erection of a memorial headstone, the inscription to read as follows: 'In loving memory of Diana Jones (nee Liell) 13.1.1920 – 13.4.2012. Devoted and much-loved Daughter, Sister and Aunt, Wife, Mother and Grandmother. Dedicated and Caring Nurse. Rest in Joy and Peace'. The size of the proposed headstone falls within the relevant NTTC requirements. Members are asked to consider approval for this memorial headstone to be erected.

15. Planning matters for Council Resolution

15.1. 0122/21/FUL Essington Barnfield, North Tawton EX20 2BY, Erection of Agricultural Building, Mr J Rice.

15.2. 0444/21/FUL The Field Bouchers Hill North Tawton EX20 2DG, Erection of general purpose agricultural building and glasshouse, alterations to vehicular access and formation of hardstanding (Resubmission of 0351/20/FUL). Mr And Mrs Wyld.

16. Finance

16.1. Invoices. To examine payments for the month of February 2021. At present, payments are being approved by the Clerk, after examination by the Chair of Finance, as part of emergency delegated powers. *Relevant paperwork to be distributed and published prior to the meeting.*

16.2. Monthly statement – to receive the monthly statement and to consider adoption. *Relevant paperwork to be distributed and published prior to the meeting.*

16.3. Increase to Town Centre Car Park Access Fees 2021

16.3.1. Background – Members will be aware that the Council owns the Town Centre Car Park. Dating from the Council's acquisition of the car park, an annual fee has been charged to the owners of properties who have a right to drive through the car park to access dedicated parking spaces associated with their properties. It appears that the original fee was based around a percentage of the estimated cost of periodic resurfacing of the car park and has remained at £50.00 per property per annum ever since.

16.3.2. Financial implication – If the access fee remains permanently at this level, it will no longer accurately reflect a percentage of resurfacing costs, the majority of which will come out of the relevant council reserves earmarked for this purpose.

16.3.3. Proposal – It is proposed that the Council approve a 10% increase in the fee for the coming financial year, making each individual fee £55.00, and that a report detailing potential future costs of the car park be presented to the Council's Estates Committee in September 2021, at which time the Council can consider the future level of access fees and the basis on which the fees will be calculated.

16.4. Increase to Cemetery Fees 2021

16.4.1 Background – For a number of years the cemetery fees have been increased annually by 5%, with a report being presented to the Council in November of each year. This was not able to be completed last November, so this proposal represents the usual annual review of fees.

16.4.2 Financial Implication – The income from Interments and Memorial fees for the current FY to date is in the sum of £2182.00. This is far outweighed by the annual maintenance costs of the cemetery including grass cutting and tree works.

16.4.3 Proposal – It is suggested that members agree a 5% increase for all fees with effect from 1 April 2021, and that future fee revisions should also take effect as from the start of each financial year. It is further suggested that a report on cemetery fee levels for nearby parishes be presented to the Council's Estates Committee by September 2021 in order for a comparison to be made and considered by the Committee.

Refer to proposed revised fees document for information, also available on website

16.5. Further minor amendments to NTTC Finance Regulations January 2021

16.5.1. NTTC Finance Regulations Section 6.19 states

“A pre-paid debit card may be issued to employees with varying limits. These limits will be set by the council. Transactions and purchases made will be reported to the council and authority for topping-up shall be at the discretion of the council.”

16.5.2. The Council’s multipay card falls under the above definition. For clarification it is suggested that the council propose a single transaction limit and an upper maximum amount to be spent in each calendar month. *(It is the Clerk’s recollection that the upper limit was suggested to be £500.00, but this does not appear to be minuted.)*

16.5.3. It is further suggested that a clause be included in this section stating that both the NTTC Clerk/RFO and the NTTC Assistant Clerk be issued with a multipay card.

16.5.4. NTTC Finance Regulations Section 6.21

“a) The RFO shall maintain a petty cash float of £100 for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses. Vouchers for payments made from petty cash shall be kept to substantiate the payment.” *[NB – it is not clear why the sum of £100 is mentioned, the actual PC float has been £70 for a number of years and has not increased].*

It is suggested that members consider revising the amount of petty cash float.

16.6 Royal British Legion – Poppy Wreath

The Council has received an invoice in the sum of £18.50 for our Poppy Wreath for Remembrance Day 2020. In the past the Council has agreed to pay extra to include a donation to the RBL – eg last year we paid a total of £50. Members are asked to consider if they now wish to make an equivalent or alternative donation.

17. Parish Matters - No items will be discussed under Parish Matters for the foreseeable future.

18. 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.

19. Date of next meetings

19.1. The next Ordinary Meeting of the Town Council shall be Tuesday 6 April 2021 at 7.15 pm unless otherwise notified.

19.2. Remote/zoom meetings from 7th May Remotely held meetings will cease to be written in to law from midnight 6th May 2021. The advice from Counsel sought by NALC/SLCC confirms that online meetings may be permitted by the LGA 1972. The Courts are now being approached to try to get them to confirm this, so that even if Government does not bring forward primary legislation to make online meetings specifically lawful, the Courts will at least confirm that they are not unlawful! Online meetings are lawful before 7th May but we don't yet know whether they will be unlawful after that date, but online meetings after 7th May are certainly not illegal, as there are no laws that prohibit them.

19.3. Annual Town Meeting - The Annual Town Meeting is accountable to the electors as a whole and must be held between 1st March and 1st June 2021. The Annual Town Meeting is open to all electors of the Parish, who have the right not only to attend but also to speak on any matter of local interest. Councillors to determine if NTTC hold the Annual Town Meeting on the same night of the Annual Town Council Meeting. Whilst not best practice, so long as there is a clear distinction between the two, and each meeting is formally opened and closed so that everyone present knows which meeting is taking place at any given time, this is acceptable.

19.4. Annual Town Council Meeting 4th May 2021, 7.15pm

20. PART II - EXEMPT REPORTS:

That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by S.100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

There are no Part II Exempt Reports