



## **BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Arms Everytne House, Blyth, on Thursday 30 May 2024 at 6.00 pm**

#### **Present:**

#### **Town Councillors**

A Barrass (Mayor), A Cartie (Deputy Mayor), D Carr, G Davey, S Davey, B Erskine, C Jones, K Nisbet, J R Potts, J Reid, M Richardson, S Stanger,

#### **Apologies**

Councillors: C Humphrey, M Robson, A Watson.

#### **Officers in Attendance**

Joseph Hughes, Town Clerk  
Malcolm Wilkinson, Deputy Town Clerk  
Elaine Brown, Principal Officer

#### **Also, in Attendance**

Rob Strettle - NCC

#### **Members of the public: 56**

#### **Meeting**

The Mayor, Councillor Aileen Barrass welcomed everyone to the meeting, commenting that the Town Meeting is an opportunity for residents to come along and ask questions. She said it is an honour and a privilege to be elected as Mayor and she will be working closely with Councillor Aidrian Cartie as Deputy.

The Mayor spoke of the many exciting projects that are ongoing in Blyth; the Northumberland Line, regeneration developments at Bridge Street

and the Market Place and other projects assuring that like a phoenix, Blyth will rise again.

The Mayor spoke of the wonderful Town Council events; Blyth Live, Blyth Town Carnival, Firework Display, Christmas events and many more including the D-Day event this coming weekend. She also spoke of the ongoing work of the Town Council to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

Work continues developing a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Mayor reflected on the challenging times of late due to ongoing roadworks, businesses moving from the town centre, the continuing struggles faced by many because of the cost-of-living crisis, and the need for support being greater than ever.

The Mayor reminded that Blyth is more than a town centre, it is a vibrant community with many positive community projects taking place. She commended the many volunteers and voluntary groups that give up their time to improve and clean up the town and the Town Councillors for their support and dedication to the town.

The Mayor invited approval of the minutes from the previous meeting held on Thursday 25 May 2023. Amendments were made to the details of those present to include A Barrass as Deputy Mayor, and C Jones. It was noted that A Cartie had submitted apologies and D Carr, B Erskine and J Reid were recorded as absent when they were present.

These amendments were agreed and approved by those in attendance as a true record by those present.

Rob Strettle, was introduced as guest speaker and he gave a presentation on Energising Blyth, sharing information on progress to date and timescales for the completion of various projects. A copy of the presentation would be available on the Blyth Town Council website.

Questions were invited from members of the public present and Councillors.

- The masterplan for the Keel Row was in early days – it was anticipated to consult and engage on plans later this year.
- It was queried whether the Masterplan would include public toilets. It was noted that the Market Place Toilet would be upgraded as part of regeneration works. The loss of the Keel Row public toilets could be alleviated through provision within the bus station or the library, but it was reiterated that plans were in the early stages of development.

- Two letters from residents were handed to Rob regarding concerns of the lack of retail offer in the town centre. A retailer that was present at the meeting stated that they believed the decline in retail was due to online shopping.
- It was queried what plans were in place to attract businesses to Blyth – Rob confirmed that the energy sector has a funded programme to attract investment and NCC are prospecting for interest in the town centre. There is no direct advertising at present, this come when the offer is more visible.
- A resident informed of a previous scheme for a youth zone at Westgate House, it was noted that whilst there was a capital offer on the table, the revenue required for the project was not available and there was risk of disabling existing youth provision in the town.
- It was queried whether Westgate House was looked at as part of the regeneration/investment programme. It was confirmed that this was previously looked as part of an options appraisal, but was ruled out due to costs, access issues and limitations on the building.
- Parking on Waterloo Road outside the shops will not be included in the plans. The parking arrangements that will be put in place will ensure the whole area can be managed more effectively.

The Mayor thanked Rob for his attendance.

The Mayor invited questions from the floor.

A query was raised as to why public names and addresses are published for the floodlighting skate park planning consultation, but the Town Council had not publicised the names and addresses of those who responded to the public consultation on the proposed skate park in 2022. It was explained that responses to planning applications are part of the legal planning process. Town Council consultations are limited by General Data Protection Regulation and the need to protect individuals' data.

A lengthy heated discussion took place with three residents talking passionately about their objections to the planned skatepark.

Members of the Council explained that the decision to proceed with the scheme was made transparently following the democratic process and a full debate by members of the council.

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm.

Signed

