**EAST BEDLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Annual Assembly (Annual Parish Meeting) held on Tuesday 29 May 2013 at 6:00pm at East Bedlington Community Centre, Bedlington.**

**Present:**

**Councillors**

Alex Wallace (Chairman)

Allan Stewart (Vice Chairman)

Jay Davis

Joe Dobie

David Armstrong

Paul Hedley

Nichola Hogarth

Colin Parker

Terry Johnson

**In attendance:**

Assistant Clerk

PCSO Dave Johnston

Martin Lawlor – Chief Executive Port of Blyth

1. members of the public

**CO 019/13 Welcome and apologies**

The Chairman opened the meeting and apologies for absence had been received on behalf of Councillor Ron Thornton(Parish Clerk), Councillor David Graham and Councillor Andrea Innes.

RESOLVED

**That the apologies for absence be accepted**

**CO 020/13 Guest Speaker – Martin Lawlor – Chief Executive Officer Port of Blyth**

The Chairman introduced Martin Lawlor of Port of Blyth who gave an informative talk about the history of the Port, its constitutional make up as a Trust Port and its accountability to its stakeholders. He explained that the Port has three main strands – the Port of Blyth Operating Division which looks after mattes such as river depths, handling and warehousing; Transped – which is the Ports door to door world wide freight forwarder and Port Training Services – which is responsible for training of all employees and is also recognised UK wide as the preferred training provider for the Port Industry. He commented that although the Port had lost its largest customer during the past year in Rio Tinto Alcan, it had managed to record its most profitable year to date by diversifying its business base. As the Port was a Trust all surplus funds are reinvested into the Ports development. Mr Lawlor went on to explain the future plans for the expansion of the port which included the proposed construction by RES of a Biomass Power Station on Battleship Wharf, renewable sector business development on Bates Wharf and potential redevelopment of the former power station site currently owned by RWE Npower. He added potential new businesses would be encouraged to bring in, wherever possible, raw materials via the Port to reduce the impact of road haulage on local communities and he explained the Port is working in partnership with Northumberland County Council, ARCH and land owners to develop exciting projects which have the potential to bring hundreds of jobs to the estuary, with the potential to inject investment into the local economy. He also advised that the Trustees were mindful of the importance of retaining the leisure aspect of the Port and improvements to walkways to increase accessibility would continue, however, he also advised that health and safety were of paramount importance and it was sometimes necessary to restrict access to areas for such reasons. Questions were invited

**Question 1** Would the Ferry be coming back? Mr Lawlor responded that this was not a consideration and unlikely to happen in the future as all recent studies had concluded that it was not economically viable. Alternatives to reduce traffic congestion which are more likely to be explored include a potential foot/ cyclepath bridge or a road bridge.

**Question 2** Would the proposed Biomass Power Station propose a fire risk to the nearby houses? It was reported that the decision on the development of a Biomass Power Station would be made at Ministerial Level in Westminster and not locally, from the Port of Blyth’s point of view they have emergency plans in place and are exploring the use of heat sensors and infra red technology to detect rises in temperature as additional safety features in their warehousing operations. It was explained that risk management was taken extremely seriously and constantly reviewed.

**Question 3** Could the old jetties on the north side of the river and the old ferry landing be improved or made safer and made more accessible for those wanting to use the river for leisure purposes? Mr Lawlor gave an undertaking to look into this in conjunction with the Harbour Master and re-iterated his earlier comments regarding the balance between opening up areas for leisure and health and safety. The Chairman thanked Mr Lawlor for his talk that had been informative and most welcome, adding that copies of the Port of Blyth Annual Report were available at the end of the meeting.

**CO 021 /13 Feedback from Small Grant Beneficiaries and presentation of Grant Awards for the current year.**

**East Bedlington Community Centre** – Chairman Ron Straughan explained how the small grant given by the Parish Council had helped the Trustees set up and improve the facilities for local groups. The Community Centre has gone from strength to strength benefiting from additional small grant funding from local trusts to help improve the facilities for its users and although there was disappointment that the previous administration of Northumberland County Council had not been able to make a decision on funding the redevelopment of the upper floor he advised that additional space on the lower floor had been offered by the property owners Sleekburn Estates, which has led to the Trustees appointing architect Hugh Massey to design and project manage the extension to the current letting space. He concluded with the continued support and involvement of the local community the Centre would continue to become a much needed facility for local people.

**Friends of Gallagher Park** – Treasurer Joe Henderson reported on the history and achievements of the group over the past decade and urged the community to get behind the committee to ensure that the good work and efforts are continued and prove to honour the memory of George Webster who pioneered much of the early work. Allan Stewart added that the need for community facilities has now been met by East Bedlington Community Centre and efforts can now be concentrated on developing the outdoor leisure activities in Gallagher Park for the local community. The Parish Council were thanked for their support in kind by way of facilitating meeting facilities for the group. The contribution to the park from Northumberland County Councillors was also recognised.

 **Stead Lane Primary School** – Councillor Colin Parker presented a cheque for £1200 to Sue Greaves Chair of Governors of the school. Thanking the Parish Council for its support, she explained that the school would use the money as it had in the past to support a community fair which helps put something back into the community.

 **Cambois Primary School** – Councillor Parker presented a cheque for £1200 to Kim Green, Chair of Governors of the school. Kim explained that this year the school would be using the funds to purchase bicycles and pay for tuition and cycling safety. She thanked the Parish Council for its contribution.

**Burnside Estate Residents Group** – Councillor Parker presented a cheque to the Chairman of the residents group Keith Scantlebury for £250 to help the group with start up costs. He thanked the Parish Council for its support in setting up the group along with the Police and Wansbeck CVS.

**CO 022/13 Minutes of the previous Annual Assembly**

RESOLVED

**That the minutes of the Annual Assembly held on 29 May 2013 be agreed and signed as a correct record.**

**CO 023/13 Annual Report**

The Chairman gave an overview of the Parish Council’s achievements over the past 12 months. He expressed his gratitude to the Clerk and his Assistant and to Councillor’s Jeff Gobin and Valerie Tyler who have between them funded £60k toward projects identified as needed by parishioners through the Parish survey.

RESOLVED

**That the Annual Report be received**

**CO 024/13 Questions from the Community**

The Chair explained that the Annual Assembly (Annual Parish Meeting) was the one meeting each year where the electorate could submit resolutions; take part in debate and vote. However as no resolutions had been received the meeting would proceed to open forum.

Carol Fife enquired as to whether any consideration had been given to the question posed in her article for the Parish magazine about Charles Saint with regarding the placing of a blue plaque to commemorate his birth place. The Chairman requested that the Assistant Clerk respond. The Assistant Clerk advised that a meeting of the relevant working group had not yet taken place due to the election of new members of the Council. She was aware of a number of organisations keen to develop and promote the history of Bedlington and that the matter would be an agenda item for consideration as a heritage matter.

Carol Crossland asked why councillors did not attend any of the specific issue hearing with the Planning Inspectorate for the proposed Biomass Power Station in December. The Chairman responded that as Chair of the RES Liaison Group he had channelled concerns from the community through that group and reported back. Specific commendation had been given to Mrs Crossland and her husband for their contribution to the information passed on. His own personal reasons for not attending additional meetings being work related, he did not feel it was ethical to discuss the matter further when other councillors were not present to make their own representation.

The Chair thanked Councillors and the public for their contributions and invited all present to join him for light refreshments.

**CO 025/13 Date and time of the next meeting**

The next Parish Council meeting will be on Tuesday 4 June 2013 at 6:00pm