

THE PARISH COUNCIL OF SEDBERGH

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council of Sedbergh held in The People's Hall, Sedbergh on 11th December 2014

Present: Councillors Hodge (Chair), Capstick, Allan, Longlands, Mary Macpherson, Brooks, Sedgwick, Ian McPherson and Atkins

1. Apologies:

Apologies were received from Cllrs Dawson and Lancaster

2. Requests for Dispensations

There were no requests for dispensations

3. Declarations of Interest

Item 9 – Planning, Cllrs Ian McPherson S/03/250B and Longlands S/03/564A

Item 11 – Grants, Sedbergh.org.uk website, Cllr Mary Macpherson

4. Police Report

A written report was received by Members.

5. NatWest Bank

Catherine Doyle – Regional Director (North) and Heather Clough – Local CEO (Cumbria)

The meeting welcomed representatives from Natwest Bank following the formal request made to Barclays Bank plc and Natwest Bank in November. Barclays Bank declined to attend

The meeting welcomed NatWest and opened the discussion by asking what criteria are used when assessing decisions for closure and why there was no customer consultation prior to the announcement. Recently, in a letter sent by Ross McEwan, Chief Executive for the Royal Bank of Scotland Group, to Rt Hon Dr Vince Cable MP stated that 'Closing a branch is not a decision we take lightly, and we always do it in consultation with staff and customers about alternative options' It was pointed out that there had been no consultation with either their own customers, with the community or with the local Post Office. Catherine Doyle took a copy of this letter for further comment.

Catherine Doyle firstly acknowledged the feelings apparent and expressed apologies for the concerns felt in the town. The decision to close Sedbergh branch (as well as others countrywide) had been made due to falling numbers of customers attending branches and the changing way in which customers do their banking. Meetings had recently taken place with Ross McEwan, Jane Howard and Tim Farron MP following the announcement and the decision remained to close the Branch. There are arrangements in place for a Mobile Bank to attend Sedbergh once a week and a new commitment to maintain an ATM and a promise to support the Post Office in the coming months.

Heather Clough gave information relating to the Mobile Bank advising that it would operate from Junction 36 and would attend Dent and Sedbergh. Confirming that although there is a daily cash limit they are confident that this would not be in an issue and clarified that transactions would be processed the same day. Heather reiterated that the scheduled timings are subject to review and will have the potential to be reactive to customer demand, if the need is identified. The planned days are Monday or Wednesday and the Bank will be sited on Joss Lane car park with an Opening time of approximately 90 minutes. This was met with derision as it was considered to be totally inadequate.

Cllr Ian McPherson asked who owns the building and Catherine Doyle confirmed that it was NatWest and that she would give SPC the contact details for their Property Department for further specific enquiries. Advising that a Locality Team could also offer input on possible future uses of the building and what is the best solution for the Community.

Further questions were raised by Councillors over what information was looked in to locally prior to the decision, NatWest's agreement with the Post Office in relation to services is a national one, so the capacity of the local Post Office in Sedbergh was not specifically considered until after the decision was made. It was noted that the Post Office receives only a small remuneration for handling Bank monies and that the premises are very small.

Peter Marshall then raised various points, including the actual operating cost of the Bank and how footfall is actually considered in comparison to proximity of value of surrounding Business/Corporate/Retail customers. Now, in light of the closure of Barclays, he asked if there was a potential to reconsider the increased value that could be attracted and offset this against the costs of closing/selling the Bank, not least the cost of removing the Safe from the basement of the building. Could, therefore, NatWest defer their decision for twelve months whilst further investigations were sought and a proposal put forward, taking into consideration costs incurred to close the Bank against the potential increased income generated by possible new customers?

Catherine Doyle thanked Peter Marshall for his comments and advised that this information would be taken back. SPC will document the information identified at the meeting, send it to Catherine and will continue communications, giving updates at a future meeting.

Several other questions/comments were also acknowledged, including a request for continuing support for the Post Office, an invite to return to a future meeting and the concern for businesses storing of extra cash on their premises. It was also highlighted that by closing branches, customers are left with 'no choice' as to how they want to carry out their banking. A request to support rural communities by maintaining branches on the High Street was reiterated.

This section of the meeting closed with Catherine Doyle and Heather Clough thanking SPC and members of the Public for the participation and giving an assurance to continue their commitment to be transparent in their liaison with customers and the community. Finally, Cllr Hodge thanked them for attending the meeting.

6. Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council 13th November 2014

The minutes were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman Cllr Hodge.

7. Matters arising from the Minutes of 13th November 2014

Item 9 (17g) – Parish Council Award Scheme and Vision for Sedbergh – a date has yet to be confirmed and Cllr Hodge will write directly to establish a meeting in the New Year, reminding Members that all Councillors need to attend.

8. Report from District/County Council

Apologies were received from District and County Council.

9. Planning

A written report was adopted by the meeting including the Committee's comments on planning applications, however, the following application was considered by the full Council.

Cllr Ian McPherson left the room while the application for W Dawson & Sons - S/03/250B was discussed. Cllr Atkins presented the plans to the Members and it was resolved that there were no objections to the proposal.

Post Office Yard S/03/316D –following the recent site visit, Cllr Ian McPherson advised that YDNPA had resolved to refuse the application. As the resolution was contrary to the Officers original recommendation, the application will now be referred back to the February meeting of the Planning Committee in accordance with the Authority's procedures.

The Commons Act 2006, Part 1 – it was agreed that inclusion of this information should be submitted in the Lookaround report.

10. Finance

The meeting received the minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resource Committee held on the 9th November 2014. Arising from those minutes, points to note were as follows

Item 5 – Financial Summary – Scottish Power for Loftus Hill/Joss Lane, Cllr Longlands would like to seek clarification on amounts being paid. Confirmed, Amenities to read relevant meters.

Item 7 – Budget – Following recommendation it was agreed to formally adopt the Budget.

Request for payments - The Council agreed a list of payments submitted to the meeting.

11. Grants

A grant application from Sedbergh.org.uk was agreed - £1500.00.

12. Public Participation

County Councillor Libby Bateman wished to comment on the ongoing correspondence in relation to Post 16 Transport provision. Advising that transport was not a Statutory requirement but acknowledging that the Education Select Committee proposed a review in 2011 and this had still not come to fruition. Cllr Atkins noted that the Guidelines, however, state that Post 16 students in rural areas should not be disadvantaged against their peers in towns. It was agreed that we should all try and work together, including Tim Farron MP and Rory Stewart MP to achieve a satisfactory outcome. It was also noted that some Colleges operate free transport as a commercial decision to encourage increased numbers of students.

13. Amenities Committee

A written report of the meeting held on the 10th December 2014 was received by the meeting and the following points were noted.

Item 7 – Car parking – Following the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice to a vehicle with trailer parked in the Long Bay on Joss Lane a request had been made to P&R Committee and Amenities to discuss the issue. The vehicle did possess a resident permit. It was agreed that further discussion and solution needed to be sought at a future meeting. In the interim the Clerk confirmed the Fixed Penalty Notice issued, had now been cancelled while SLDC awaited SPC final confirmation.

Item 7 – Parking in Bays along Main Street – Clerk to contact CCC Highways and ask for increased patrols with the inclusion of the area in front of St Andrew's Church. It was also agreed that the Council should deliver letters to businesses in Main Street to seek their co-operation by not parking their own vehicles in the lay-bys on Main Street.

Item 7 – Free Parking – Following a request for Free parking by the Chamber of Trade & Business, both the Amenities Committee and the P&R Committee recommended agreement for 14th and 21st December and this was agreed for Joss Lane and Loftus Hill. This was agreed by the members and the Clerk will notify SLDC.

Item 14 – Other – Following a letter received in connection with planting trees on the car parking area owned by SPC at Guldrey Lane. It was agreed that permission would not be given, but the resident should plant within their own property boundary.

Item 14 – Other – Path leading to Church Walk - Following reports of the path being slippery, it was agreed that, whilst the Council does not assume responsibility for the condition of use of the path, two signs should be made advising 'This path may be slippery' as an interim measure.

14. Sedbergh Townscape Project

An updating report was received by the Council.

Church Lych Gate (parking area in front of St Andrews) CCC has advised this area is part of CCC Highways. A request will be made to them to participate in proposals to improve the surface and appearance of this area. Should the County Council feel unable to assist, it was agreed to examine the possibility of the land being transferred to the Parish Council.

Recycling Bins – Joss Lane, SLDC have confirmed that CWM will consider a dual pick up area in Sedbergh so a further approach to James Hall & Co, the owners of the Spar site will now be made.

15. Queens Garden

No update

16. Transport/Post 16 Transport – update

SPC have written a letter to David Laws MP seeking answers to specific questions over Guidelines on transport in rural areas and a copy was sent to Graham Stuart MP, Chair of the Education Select Committee. A response is yet to be received. Settlebeck and Sedbergh Primary have given early indications of numbers hoping to travel in 2015 and this information has been relayed to Cllr Nick Cotton and Cheryl Cowperthwaite.

17. Community Asset Register Proposal

Cllr Ian Macpherson has contacted SLDC in connection with a proposal to include the Barclays Bank and NatWest building on the Community Asset Register. It was agreed to formally propose to the District Council that both buildings be so nominated. It was also noted, that further buildings in the Parish may also be eligible and this should be considered at a future meeting.

18. Correspondence

The attached Clerk's Report was considered by the meeting

- a. Barclays Bank – a letter should be sent in response to their reply from the Chief Executive.
- b. ENW Lights – Further correspondence in relation to the potential removal of lights on telegraph poles confirmed that this exercise was being carried out over a significant number of years and the only immediate light affected was the one at Loftus Manor. CCC and SLDC are assessing costs and will report to SPC in due course.
- c. Parish Hand-push Bier – awaiting further contact from B Goad.
- d. Solar Projects – meeting agreed not to pursue this further.
- e. Epic Events – a letter has been received in relation to displaying a banner and further ways of working together in the town for their fell running event on 17 May 2015. Cllr Longlands offered to meet on 16/12/14.
- f. Parish Polls – Agree that this should be discussed at the January meeting.

19. Date and Time of next meeting - Thursday 8th January 2015 at 7.30 pm - People's Hall Committee Room.