

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE GODMANCHESTER TOWN HALL ON THURSDAY 19 AUGUST 2004

PRESENT: W D BUTTERWORTH Town Mayor,

Councillors: D BROWN, H R BUTCHER, R COXHEAD, Mrs C A GODLEY, A GOFF, L HOLGATE, Mrs H HULL, C R HYAMS, E KYNOCH, Mrs A M LOOKER, Mrs B

MOORE, C VANE PERCY

Town Clerk: A J WELTON

APOLOGIES: Councillors: M COHEN Deputy Town Mayor

There was 1 member of the public present.

04/055 PRESENTATION BY HGTA

Mr. Malcolm Lyons, Chairman of HGTA, talked about Twinning and HGTA's future plans. For the benefit of those present who were new to the Town Council, he gave some of the background and history of the Huntingdon and Godmanchester Twinning Association (HGTA). He described the various exchanges, both sporting and cultural and also indicated that HGTA also wished to promote tourism between the 4 towns involved; Huntingdon/Godmanchester, Salon de Provence, Wertheim am Main and Szentendre.

Cllr Mrs LOOKER arrived at 7.38pm.

Cllr VANE PERCY arrived at 7.44pm.

TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The MAYOR advised that he had represented the Town on 3 occasions since the last meeting. The MAYOR reminded Councillors that they were required to complete declarations of financial and other interests and return them to the Town Clerk as soon as possible.

Following the earlier display of the proposed CCC traffic calming measures, the MAYOR announced that he would be holding an informal Working Party to discuss priorities on Tuesday 24 August 2004 in QES, starting at 8.00pm. Included in each information envelope was a proforma for Cllrs to indicate their priority requirements. These would be consolidated and forwarded to CCC for action.

All Councillors had been sent details of a session on the Ethical Framework, Standards and the Code of Conduct being held at Pathfinder House on 22 September but to date the Town Clerk had not had any indication of those intending to attend.

The MAYOR advised that he, Cllr Mrs MOORE and the Town Clerk had held interviews for the post of Assistant to the Town Clerk and had selected Mrs Nicol from a list of 6 short-listed candidates. Mrs Nicol had indicated that she would be able to start work on Monday 6 September 2004 and the MAYOR asked for approval to appoint her on 6 month's probation.
APPROVED.

The MAYOR reminded all Cllrs that Mrs Moorhouse, the Town Clerk's Assistant would be leaving on Friday 20 August 2004. He was sure that the Town Council would want to join in thanking her for her hard work over the past 12 months and wishing her well in her new job.

Following the incidents of youths on the roof of QES many of the slates had been broken and displaced. The Town Clerk, together with approval from the Mayor and Cllr Mrs Looker had authorised repairs by Period Property Restorations who had quoted £350.00. APPROVED. Measures to prevent access to the roof by unwanted intruders were discussed and the Town Clerk was instructed to obtain quotations for the work. As some of the damage had been caused to the roof of the toilet extension belonging to HDC, the Town Clerk was to advise HDC of the damage.

There had been a recent flurry of e-mails between members of the Council in which matters that should more properly be debated by the full Council had been the subject and moreover had not always been addressed to all members of the Council. Whilst e-mails were the ideal medium for passing reports and information, the MAYOR requested that such debates be conducted in the Council Chamber or, at the very least, be brought up at Working Party meetings. General discussion on the use of e-mails then followed.

04/056 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 July 2004 were APPROVED and signed as a complete and accurate record.

Cllr Mrs GODLEY asked that paragraph 04/053 District Council Reports be amended to indicate that both she and Cllr HYAMS had indicated that they would both keep the council informed. The Town Clerk would amend the paragraph and present it for signature by the Mayor.

04/057 MATTERS ARISING

The Outstanding Actions List dated 19 August 2004 was reviewed.

04/058 CORRESPONDENCE

The correspondence listed at Appendix A, not covered by the WP reports, was addressed.

Cllr Mrs MOORE arrived at 8.15pm.

At Cllr Mrs MOORE's request, the MAYOR brought forward the Finance WP report for discussion at this point so that Cllr Mrs MOORE could leave straight after her presentation.

Finance. The WP had met on 10 August 2004. Among topics discussed was the increase in salaries for Town Council staff as recommended by CALC guidelines. The Chair asked the Town Council to approve the following changes:

Town Clerk – currently on LC1 scale (for councils with populations below 5000), spinal column 16. Salary to be moved to spinal column 17 (as a normal annual increment) and upgraded as recommended by CALC. This would mean an increase from £7.38 per hour to £7.76 per hour, backdated to April 2004 and to £8.15 per hour from April 2005 (including a

move to spinal column 18). All based on 75 hours per month. Additionally, the supervisory element was to be raised from £1590 per annum to £1632, with effect from April 2004 and to £1680 from April 2005.

Town Clerk's Assistant:

Current Assistant – SPC6 (£5.54 per hour for 16.5 hours per week). To be increased to £5.70 per hour backdated to April 2004. APPROVED.

New Assistant – Minimum wage of £4.85 per hour for probationary 6 months (15 hours per week). To be increased to SPC6 on satisfactory completion of probationary period and hours increased to 16½ per week (£5.70 per hour to March 2004 and £5.86 per hour from April 2005).

JF Caretaker – Current monthly salary to be increased in line with other percentage increases to £283 per month, backdated to April 2004 and £290 per month from April 2005.

QES Caretaker – No increase.

The above increases and adjustments were APPROVED.

The Town Council was asked to approve, retrospectively, additional payment for the advertisements for the Town Clerk's Assistant post from £500.00 to £530.00. Town Clerk's Note: The actual cost was £540.40 plus VAT and this amount was APPROVED.

The letting policy for both Judith's Field and Queen Elizabeth School was re-examined and it was reconfirmed that charges as agreed should be made for all users, with exception of Town Councillors on Town Council business and for the Friends of QES for QES use only. This was APPROVED by a majority of 12:2, Cllrs Mrs GODLEY & HYAMS having voted against.

Cllrs Mrs MOORE went on to advise that, as requested, the WP had considered whether there were any CALC courses of particular relevance to members of the Finance WP but none had been identified.

Cllr Mrs MOORE had put considerable effort into producing a set of Financial Regulations for approval by the Council. Because of their complexity and the lack of time available during the meeting, all Councillors were asked to present their comments to the Town Clerk by no later than Friday 27 August 2004 so that the Financial Regulations could be ratified at the September meeting.

In line with instruction 6.6 of those regulations, the Chair of the Finance WP asked the Town Council to approve the use of variable Direct Debits for the payment of the following:

1. Water Rates (QES and JF) – Anglia Water
2. Electricity (QES and JF) – Powergen
3. Gas (QES and JF) – British Gas
4. Community Charge (QES, JF and Cemetery) – HDC
5. Telephones (Town Office) – NTL
6. Telephones (Alarm & 999 lines at JF) – BT.

All were APPROVED and it was noted that approval would be required again in 2006.

In line with instruction 8.2 of the regulations, approval was sought for the current investment regime. This would be reviewed annually. The item would be approved at the next meeting, when the balances in the various accounts would be presented.

The WP would examine the Risk Management aspects of financial controls at the next WP meeting and would also examine the possibility of introducing Standing Orders at that time. The MAYOR and Cllr Mrs MOORE would look into this before the next WP meeting.

The next Finance WP meeting was arranged for Tuesday 7 September 2004 starting at 8.00pm at 4 Crowhill.

The Town Clerk was to ascertain whether copies of the CALC Financial Regulations were available on the internet. Town Clerk's Note: As the Town Council had had to pay for the model copy of the Regulations, they were not available over the internet.

Cllr Mrs MOORE left the meeting at 9.10pm.

04/059 ACCOUNTS

The accounts set out in Appendix B were APPROVED.

As last year, the Town Clerk explained that under current audit procedures it was necessary for the Town Council to approve and record the "Statement of Assurance" of the Annual Return. After discussion of the detail, the Town Council APPROVED the Statement of Assurance, which was signed by the MAYOR and the Town Clerk. Mr Sneath, the independent Internal Auditor, had already carried out the required work on the Statement of Assurance.

04/060 PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

The applications and correspondence set out in Appendix C were considered. The Town Clerk was to advise HDC of the Council's recommendations.

04/061 DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORTS

Cllrs Mrs GODLEY and HYAMS, together with HDC staff officers and some local residents from the Lions Cross area had met to discuss the development at Lavender Grove. The residents had expressed concern that the development was not being carried out in accordance with the approved planning application. The HDC planners had assured the residents that everything was as planned but that if they still had concerns, these should be addressed to David Monks, the Chief Executive of HDC. If still unresolved, the matter could be referred to the Ombudsman.

Cllr Mrs GODLEY suggested that Nigel Finney, the Director of Housing at HHP, should be invited to address the Town Council to clarify the Street Warden Scheme. It was AGREED to invite him to the October 2004 meeting as the Town Clerk had already received a request from Ms Murden to speak to the Council in September about Traffic Calming Scheme. This was considered to be the more pressing matter. Cllr KYNOCH opposed the presentation.

There was some discussion about the scheme, during which Cllr Mrs LOOKER reminded the Town Council that it, together with other Councils, had declined to join in funding of Street Wardens but that the scheme had received funding from other sources for 2 years from 2002. The Street Warden Scheme covered a very large area and wardens tended to concentrate on HHP Association housing areas. There had been a government announcement that their aim was to provide funding for up to 20,000 PCSOs/Street Wardens but it was not certain which scheme would benefit. Further discussion of the matter was deferred until later in the year.

Cllr HYAMS advised that he had contacted the HDC Highways Department concerning drains clearance and had been informed that it was part of an annual contract.

Cllr VANE PERCY left the meeting at 10.10pm.

04/062 WORKING PARTY (WP) REPORTS CHUMMS and A14.

The WP had not had occasion to meet and there was nothing to report.

Cemetery.

The Chair of the WP was not present but he had reported that arrangements were in hand for the installation of a memorial bench.

Environment.

Cllr BUTCHER, chair of the WP advised that the WP had met on 10 August 2004 and had discussed the following topics:

Devana Park Play Area. At the January 2004 meeting the Town Council had decided to retain the play area subject to modification and refurbishment and to re-assess the situation in 6 months. Since that time there had been only 2 major incidents and the area was still subject to minor vandalism and litter. The WP had proposed that the area be re-assessed for suitability and, if economically viable, it should be further refurbished and retained for a further period. There would be another formal review in 6 months time. It was AGREED that the Town Clerk should seek estimates from suitable contractors and that Wicksteed should be invited to quote for replacing the existing bark surface with rubber matting similar to that used in their play areas elsewhere in the town. The Town Clerk was also to seek out the draft specification prepared by former Cllr Comben for the landscaping of the undergrowth and trees currently shielding the play area.

Roman Gate Play Area. The WP discussed the ramifications of using the S106 grant to enhance the Judith's Field facilities and agreed that this was the best way forward. Advice on this was awaited from HDC.

Logworld Play Area. On 10 July 2004, a child fell from the equipment. The child appeared not to have sustained any lasting injury and the mother, in a letter to the Town Clerk, had indicated that she did not intend to take any further action at this time. Her letter and all relevant correspondence had been forwarded to the insurers and to Wicksteed. Wicksteed had since attended, carried out a routine service of the equipment and declared it fit for purpose. A reply was awaited from the insurers.

Cycle Racks – QES. The WP proposed to provide a cycle rack for use by those using the recreation ground and those fishing. Advice from HDC had been that they might be able to

provide and fit the racks once requirements had been finalised. Cllr BUTCHER would liaise with HDC and present his findings at the September meeting.

Extension to Prohibition of Waiting – Park Lane. The WP discussed the issue and decided to object to the extension subject to clarification of the use of the caravan park. The Town Clerk had written to the HDC Enforcement Officer expressing concern and was to advise CCC of the decision to object.

Play Areas – General. Wicksteed had completed all repairs and painting as requested but, because there were no specific instructions to paint the roof of the JF area, the Town Clerk was to instruct Ashley & Foster to carry out that work and additionally to paint the 2 benches in that area.

Willow Trees – Back Water. There had been a letter from Mrs Lewis expressing concern that any broken branches might hit the gardens of houses on Post Street. On inspection it was thought that her fears were unfounded. However, there was a broken branch in the river that needed to be removed and the Town Clerk was asked to action that. There had been a survey of all trees in approximately 1995 by Burleigh and the Town Clerk was instructed to try to find it. If necessary, a further survey would be carried out.

Monks Pit. The Divisional Court judgement had gone against the appeal for the reinstatement of the public footpath. However, the Ramblers Association had indicated their intention to take the matter to the Court of Appeal.

Tree Warden/Tree Planting. CCC had discontinued grant aid for tree/hedge planting but HDC would continue to offer trees through the Parish Planting Scheme. However, they were concerned that some parishes had lost up to 75% of gifted trees while others had had over 80% success. Parishes would be able to apply for up to 50 trees a year, but only if they had a named responsible or knowledgeable person as a tree warden. Cllr KYNOCH advised that he, together with Cllr VANE PERCY, were both designated tree wardens for Godmanchester. A training course was available on 11 September 2004.

Improvements to Church Place. Cllr BUTCHER advised that all work on Church Place was now complete with the installation of the new light and showed photographs of the finished article. The Town Clerk was to write to Mr Lummis at HDC to thank him.

Cllr Mrs GODLEY asked to be excused from the rest of the meeting and left at 10.30pm.

Finance

See above.

Flood Defences.

There had been no further developments but the Town Clerk was asked to chase the Environment Agency, Peter Cowie, for their promised letter.

Property/Judith's Field.

Cllr GOFF advised that the kick wall at Judith's Field would be completed in about 4 weeks time. The final cost of circa £8700 was some £1900 under the approved budget.

Health & Safety.

Cllr R COXHEAD advised that he intended to hold his first meeting of this WP on Thursday 2 September 2004 in the QES starting at 7.30pm and all Cllrs were invited to attend.

Other Representative Groups/Twinning/Inter Town Forum/Detached Youth Initiative.

Twinning. The MAYOR had circulated a report on the last meeting of the HGTA to all Cllrs for information.

Inter Town Forum. Cllr Mrs HULL advised the meeting that the Inter Town Forum would meet in Ramsey Town Council offices on Tuesday 21 September 2004 at 7.00pm and asked for agenda items to be forwarded to the Town Clerk for onwards transmission to Ramsey.

Detached Youth Initiative. Cllr Mrs HULL advised that she had received an informal report from the Detached Youth Worker, Stephanie Webb. The Problem Solving Group was meeting on Tuesday evenings and there was a proposal that a youth club might be held one night a week but that that might clash with the Muir Group "Dream Scheme" that was due to start in mid September. It was suggested that Cllr J COXHEAD might like to get involved. This would be discussed further and Cllr Mrs HULL would report back. Ms Webb was promoting the idea of the kick wall at Judith's Field with the youth that she came into contact with. Cllr Mrs LOOKER referred to an e-mail received concerning the "Dream Scheme" which was now referred to as "Live the Dream". There was to be a meeting in the Comrades Club on Thursday 16 September 2004 starting at 6.00pm. This clashed with the Town Council meeting due to start at 7.30pm that day and it was DECIDED that the Town Council meeting would be postponed until 23 September 2004. Cllr Mrs LOOKER also indicated that Inspector Hunt, the Police Sector Commander would be willing to discuss the "Street Ranger" scheme, if invited. The possibility of combining this talk with the "Street Warden" scheme talk from Mr Finney of HHP at the October meeting was AGREED.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

Cllr BROWN suggested that the post of handyman ought to be revisited and the Town Clerk was instructed to enquire of HTC about the regulations obtaining to the employment of casual workers.

Cllr BROWN went on to advise that the Ministry of Defence was interested in being involved with community projects and asked the Town Council to consider whether there were any appropriate projects that might be offered to the MoD.

It was also suggested that the Town Clerk advise the Probation Service that the Town could find suitable tasks for individuals placed under Community Service Orders.

The MAYOR reminded all Cllrs that the Civic Service was being held on Sunday 19 September 2004 and that the members of the Town Council would process from the Town Hall at 11.20am that morning.

THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING WILL BE HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2004 (GOWNED).

The meeting ended 11.00 pm Mayor