

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE GODMANCHESTER TOWN HALL ON THURSDAY 17 MARCH 2005

PRESENT: W D BUTTERWORTH Town Mayor, M COHEN Deputy Town Mayor
Councillors: D BROWN, H R BUTCHER, J COXHEAD, Mrs C A GODLEY, L
HOLGATE, Mrs H HULL, C R HYAMS, E KYNOCH, Mrs A M LOOKER, Mrs B
MOORE, Mrs E TREHARNE-JONES, C VANE PERCY
Mace Bearer: M WILLIAMS
Town Clerk: A J WELTON

APOLOGIES: Cllr: A GOFF

There were no members of the public present.

TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The MAYOR advised that he had represented the Town on 9 occasions since the last meeting. The DEPUTY MAYOR had not represented the Town since the previous meeting.

The MAYOR reminded all Councillors (Cllrs) that the Annual Town Meeting would be held on Thursday 7 April 2005 at 8.00pm in the large hall of QES and would be gowned. The initial agenda had been amended to include two short presentations by young people from the Town. All Chairs of Working Parties (WP) were asked to be prepared to make a brief presentation on the activities of their WPs over the past 12 months. Any Chair unable to attend should provide a written report to be read out at the Meeting.

The MAYOR advised all Cllrs that the Town Clerk had issued nomination papers for positions of Mayor and Deputy Mayor. All Cllrs were asked to consider nominations and return completed nomination forms to the Town Clerk before the next Town Council meeting on Thursday 21 April 2005.

The Mayor's "End of Term" Charity Ball on would be held on 6 May 2005 at Wood Green Animal Shelter and he asked that all Cllrs made a note of the date in their diaries. Invitations and menus would be distributed with the minutes.

The MAYOR reported that he had attended the Twinning Business meeting in Wertheim and official minutes would be available after translation. There were two points of significant interest; firstly, Godmanchester would be hosting the 2006 Business Meeting in February and secondly, the inter-town football competition, also to be hosted by Godmanchester had been rescheduled to take place in 2007.

The MAYOR had been invited to the Ramsey Town Civic Service on 17 April 2005 but neither he nor the DEPUTY MAYOR was able to attend. The MAYOR asked if there was any other member of the Town Council who would be able to represent Godmanchester Town Council at the service.

05/017 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.

After a minor amendment to reflect developments on youth matters, the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2005 were APPROVED and signed as a complete and accurate record.

05/018 MATTERS ARISING.

The Outstanding Actions List, dated 17 March 2005 was reviewed. The Senior Citizens Club had replied to the letter from the Town Clerk in which suggested amendments had been accepted. However, matters relating to financing were deemed not to be conditions of the lease and were to be dealt with as a separate matter.

05/019 CORRESPONDENCE.

The correspondence listed at Appendix A, not covered by the WP reports, was addressed. The Tenancy at Will prepared by the solicitors for Cedar, a company occupying premises at Roman Way Business Park, regarding the leasing of car parking spaces at Judith's Field, was APPROVED. However, the solicitors were to be asked to include a timescale and fee review period in the agreement.

The quotation for Christmas lighting, received from Gala Lights was deferred for discussion by the Property WP. In the meantime, the Town Clerk was to obtain quotations for the cost of installation from local electricians.

The Standards Board questionnaire "A Code for the Future" was discussed and copies were passed to Cllrs BROWN, COXHEAD and HOLGATE for perusal. These were to be circulated to other Cllrs in due course. Comments were to be passed to the Town Clerk and a consolidated reply would be sent to the Standards Board in July 2005.

The quotation for marking out the car parking spaces at Judith's Field, prepared by Ashley & Foster, was considered excessive and Cllrs BROWN and HOLGATE undertook to investigate alternatives.

05/020 ACCOUNTS.

The accounts set out in Appendix B were APPROVED.

05/021 PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE.

Because there had been only one, uncomplicated, planning application the WP had not met (see Appendix C). However, on the day of the Town Council meeting a further application had been received for recommendation. As a member of the HDC Development Control Panel, Cllr HYAMS declared an interest in case of any potential objections from the public. The Town Council recommended both applications for APPROVAL but the extension of dwelling at 3 Hayling Close, Godmanchester was only approved, subject to there being no objections from neighbouring properties.

05/022 DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORTS.

Cllr Mrs GODLEY advised that there were no occurrences within the District Council discussions of direct impact upon Godmanchester. However, she did indicate that the matter of the future of the Kids' Klub at the Godmanchester Community Primary School was still under discussion.

05/023 WORKING PARTY (WP) REPORTS.

Cemetery. Cllr COHEN reported that a start had not been made on the Cemetery car park resurfacing and the Town Clerk was asked to obtain a forecast start date from the contractors.

Environment. Cllr BUTCHER reported that the Environment WP had met on 9 March 2005. The WP had reviewed the draft tender document for the Grounds Maintenance contract that was due for renewal on 1 April 2006. Once it had been retyped, a copy of the revised document would be available in the Town Office for perusal. He requested that as many Cllrs as possible take an opportunity to peruse it to ensure that all aspects are covered from the outset.

Cllr BUTCHER advised that all Cllrs should have seen the e-mail advising that the surfacing works, as part of the Traffic Calming measures, would be carried out in the weeks before and after the Easter holidays. A letter drop in the immediate areas would be undertaken prior to the work starting.

Under the HDC Minor Improvements Scheme, the Town Council had applied for a continuous footpath to be provided along the eastern side of London Road to Judith's Field. The work had been included as part of the Traffic Calming scheme and was almost complete. However, Cllr BUTCHER asked for suggestions for the Minor Improvements Scheme for the coming year.

The Environment Agency had completed work on the main sluice gates and the safety fencing and they had started work on the No1 Side Weir. The path to the Lock (the Ouse Valley Way) would be closed until 25 April 2005. Repairs were also being carried out on the main Lock but were expected to be completed within the same timescale.

Cllr Mrs GODLEY had advised Cllr BUTCHER that the local Scouts had offered their services to assist with any suitable tasks that could be of benefit to the Town. It was suggested that they might like to assist with the Annual Spring Clean, which would take place on Saturday, 16 April 2005, starting at 10.00am. All Cllrs were invited to take part.

In his capacity of Chairman of the Environment WP, Cllr BUTCHER wished to record his thanks to Cllr BROWN and his MoD working party for the swift removal of the equipment from the Devana Close play area. It would now be necessary to contact Wicksteed to agree on a more "small child friendly" replacement.

At the November 2004 Town Council meeting, it had been agreed to spend up to £1000 to replace the 2 iron seats on The Avenue. The seats themselves would cost £376 each and Ashley & Foster had quoted £910 to remove the old seats, cast new concrete bases and fit the new seats. The revised cost of the project would therefore be £1662 and the Town Council APPROVED that sum.

Finance. The Finance WP had met on 9 March 2005. A set of routine monthly actions that were required to be taken by the Council was recommended and APPROVED and is listed at the end of these minutes.

The investment policy was reviewed and the WP recommended that the Business Reserve account with Barclays Bank be closed and the balance deposited in the National Savings account, together with the amount to be put aside from the increased precept for potential expansion of the building at Judith's Field. Cllr Mrs MOORE explained that currently the Town Council had 3 accounts with Barclays; a Business account for day-to-day transactions, a Premium account (attracting approximately 0.2% interest) for the precept in and out and a Reserve account that holds ring fenced monies (approximately 0.5% interest). Additionally, the Council has a National Savings account attracting more than 3.5% interest. The Town Council APPROVED recommendations.

The NALC National agreement on salaries and conditions of service of local council clerks was examined with input from the Town Clerk, who had attended the associated seminar. On salaries, it was considered that as a council Godmanchester was in the Substantive Benchmark range for scale LC2. This gave Spinal Column Points 30 – 34 as a salary range. Cllr Mrs MOORE explained that scales were no longer electorate based but were based on evaluated benchmark posts related to the activities and responsibilities of the clerk. The WP recommended that the Godmanchester Town Clerk be assimilated to that scale at the start point, SCP30. She went on to explain that the current SCP was 17, rising to 18 on 1 April 2005. The additional supplement for the supervision of other employees was no longer applicable and had been subsumed into the duties that determined the benchmark scale. Current pay was £718 per month and would have risen to £751.25 under the old scale. The new pay scale was £906.75. APPROVED.

On Conditions of Service a new model contract had been proposed and the WP examined it and suggested certain changes/additions in the current contract to bring it more into alignment with the National model. The WP would recommend some variations to suit the needs of Godmanchester Town Council. The Town Clerk was to produce an amended contract for agreement by the Town Council. The salaries for other employees remained on the previous scales and had already been agreed for 2005/2006.

The hire charges for the use of Queen Elizabeth School (QES), Judith's Field (JF) and the charges for the Cemetery were all reviewed. Because JF was not used to capacity it was recommended that the charges were not changed. For QES it was recommended that modest increases were made as they had not been amended since 2001 and were still very moderate in relation to the other halls in the area. The increases were £0.50 per hour over and above the previously published rates. A comprehensive review of the Cemetery charges had been carried out and it was recommended that charges for headstones and plaques be abolished. The charges for full size grave plots for interment for Up to 16 Years would become £70 instead of £40; for Adults the fee would rise from £80 to £150; the purchase of a Reserved Plot (inclusive of Burial Rights) would rise from £120 to £150 and the interment of Cremated Remains into an existing full size grave would rise from £40 to £50. In the Cremated remains area the charges would be: for up to 16 years of age £40 (up from £20); Adults would rise from £40 to £70 and the purchase of a Reserved Plot (inclusive of Burial Rights) would rise from £80 to £100. All these charges increases would become valid from 1 April 2005. APPROVED.

The Town Council's insurance cover was also reviewed and it was recommended that the insurance of the buildings should remain as at present but the Town Clerk was to investigate the possible need for a revaluation for 2006/2007. AGREED. Now that the church walls and gates projects had been completed the Town Clerk was to investigate whether they should be insured separately. Additionally it was AGREED that the Town Clerk would investigate whether the new lighting at JF should also be insured. The Town Clerk was also to produce a full list of items that it had been decided should not be covered by insurance because of cost effectiveness (litter-bins, seats, lifebuoys, playgrounds, the youth shelter and the shelter at the Cemetery).

Finally, it was recommended that the revised tender specification for Grounds Maintenance should be sent out to the 3 contractors previously approached as soon as practical. AGREED.

In further discussion it was DECIDED that the Town Clerk should purchase 120 chairs for QES at a cost of up to £2000 and he should try to obtain an example of the proposed replacement tables on approval for evaluation. The Town Clerk was also to check the Law and Health & Safety Regulations concerning the provision and operation of cooking facilities in QES.

Cllr Mrs GODLEY left the meeting at 9.43pm.

Flood Defences. There was nothing to report.

Health & Safety. Cllr Mrs TREHARNE-JONES indicated that she was willing to set up a temporary WP to consider the ramifications of Health & Safety provisions as they affected the Town Council and she asked for other Cllrs to provide assistance. Such a meeting would be held in April or May and the MAYOR indicated that he considered that the Town Clerk should be a member of the interim WP.

Property/Judith's Field. In the absence of Cllr GOFF there was no report. However, the MAYOR reported that Ashley & Foster had completed the repair work to the roof of JF. Concern was expressed about the state of the skateboard ramps. The Town Clerk was asked to hasten repair from HDC on Health & Safety grounds.

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

Twinning. The MAYOR reported that the 10th anniversary of the twinning of Huntingdon & Godmanchester with Szentendre would take place in 2006. There was a question of whether to celebrate it in September, in conjunction with the Sportsfest or in May 2006. The Twinning Association had indicated a preference for a separate celebration. Initial estimates of cost were in the region of £4000 - £6000 so the Godmanchester contribution based on the agreed 3:1 ratio would be £1000 - £1500. After discussion it was AGREED that the Godmanchester contribution would be no more than £1000.

Cllrs COXHEAD and VANE PERCY left the meeting at 9.59pm.

Detached Youth Initiative. Cllr Mrs LOOKER reminded Cllrs that the Minutes of the latest meeting had been circulated to all. She advised that, at the Annual Town Meeting on 7 April 2005, there would be a short presentation and a video made by the young people of Godmanchester outlining their wishes for the provision of various youth facilities in

Godmanchester. She also advised that the working group had been renamed the Godmanchester Town Council Youth Focus Group and that the MAYOR would be the ex-officio chairman.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

Cllr HYAMS advised the Town Council that there would be a strike of UNISON trade union members on 23 March 2005.

Cllr BROWN enquired about the situation regarding the refurbishment of the roll of honour. The MAYOR undertook to e-mail Cllr VANE PERCY to get an update.

Cllr COHEN advised that the weekend of 2/3 July was the 60th anniversary of the end of hostilities in Europe.

Cllr KYNOCH advised that he had attended a Huntingdon and Godmanchester Civic Society meeting at which it had been revealed that HDC might be seeking to dispose of the land currently occupied by the HDC Depot.

THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WILL BE GOWNED AND WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY 7 APRIL 2005 IN QES STARTING AT 8.00PM.

THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING WILL BE GOWNED AND WILL BE HELD ON 21 APRIL 2005.

The meeting ended at 10.30pm Mayor