

MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE TOWN HALL ON THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2009

PRESENT: M COHEN Town Mayor, D BROWN, Deputy Mayor
Councillors: R BUTCHER, J DUTTON, Mrs H HULL, N PAULEY, C RICHARDSON, N WELLS, Mrs S WORTHINGTON, G WILSON,

Town Clerk: Mrs M LIDDIARD
Mace Bearer: Mr M WILLIAMS

7 members of the public were in attendance

09/150 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

CLLR CANT: work pattern; CLLR HYAMS: holiday; CLLR Ms MIDDLETON: illness, CLLR TAYLOR: holiday, CLLR VANE PERCY: work appointment

09/151 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

CLLR Mrs WORTHINGTON: discussions relating to 2012 as her neighbour has been appointed chair of the working committee; CLLR DUTTON: discussions relating to HDC proposals regarding public conveniences as he is a District Councillor; CLLR BUTCHER: co-option to fill casual vacancy as both candidates known to him; CLLR BROWN and CLLR COHEN: planning matters relating to 2 Cambridge Road (The White Hart) as they are both acquainted with the owner and licensee.

09/152 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15th October were duly APPROVED and signed as a complete and accurate record.

09/153 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION:

Before hearing from members of the public, THE MAYOR advised he would respond to a letter in the Hunts Post from a member of the public regarding the Remembrance Day Service and the movement of traffic. Although there was a vast improvement in the management of traffic during the service from last year, there had been administrative confusion in the lead up to the event and it was important that the Town Council worked with all agencies to ensure future events were organised with all parties knowing and agreeing the procedures to be followed well in advance.

Mrs Lumley provided a summary of her understanding of the status of the footpath between Almond Close and Cambridge Road and believes the enquiry should be about the legality of blocking the footpath which is shown on her property deeds as a right of way.

Mrs Pickersgill stated her views on the question of the status of the footpath and her opinion that this should be declared a right of way as it had been in use since 1926.

Mrs Tatman expressed her views that as the footpath was unlit and not looked after that it was a potential site for anti social behaviour and she would prefer to see the route remain closed.

Mr Murray also confirmed his opinion that it should remain closed as it had led to an increase in the amount of litter in the area.

09/154 CO-OPTION TO FILL CASUAL VACANCY

Mr Martin and Mr Welton addressed the Town Council outlining their reasons for wanting to become a Councillor. After due discussion, it was AGREED to co-opt Mr Alan Welton. Town Clerk would advise HDC of the appointment and liaise with Mr Welton at the earliest opportunity. Mr Martin would be advised that as there was a further casual vacancy, if he wished to put his name forward, he would be considered again.

09/155 ALMOND CLOSE FOOTPATH

CLLR PAULEY having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this matter was permitted to speak first and then leave the room. He confirmed he had spoken with all residents in Almond Close to seek their views, some of whom have changed their minds over a period of time from their original view. CLLR PAULEY felt the issue was to find proof of ownership and he understood the assets from the Pettit Estate had reverted to Crown Estates, which is something the Town Council could investigate.

CLLR PAULEY left the room.

Following discussion, it was AGREED to write to CCC requesting action be taken to re-open the footpath. CLLR WILSON would draft the letter for the Town Clerk to send. A letter would also be sent to the Crown Estates seeking information, and the District Council Planning Enforcement Team would be sent copies of letters to advise them that the footpath had been stopped up, without due permission or notification.

CLLR PAULEY rejoined the meeting.

09/156 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

THE MAYOR confirmed that CLLR MIKE DOBBIE had resigned creating a casual vacancy on the Town Council. THE MAYOR expressed his thanks for the work CLLR DOBBIE had undertaken during his time on the Town Council. The necessary notices were being displayed and anyone interested in applying should contact the Town Clerk in the first instance.

THE MAYOR reminded everyone the Christmas Carol Service and switch on of Christmas lights would take place on Wednesday 2nd December outside the Town Hall.

THE MAYOR advised the Senior Citizens would be holding their Christmas Bazaar on Saturday 21st November in the Town Hall.

THE MAYOR had represented the town on 20 occasions since the last meeting.

09/157 TOWN CLERK'S REPORT ON MATTERS ARISING:

The Town Clerk reported that there had been a delay in carrying out the repairs to the dangerous memorials in the churchyard, as the Diocese of Ely had advised a faculty would be required, which could take some time to be issued.

09/158 DISTRICT/COUNTY COUNCIL REPORTS

CLLR WILSON suggested the issue of congestion charges be discussed at a future Town Council meeting in the light that CCC had proposed spending £500m to improve public transport in Cambridge but that congestion charging was a likely to be introduced as a result. This matter would be brought forward at the January meeting.

CLLR DUTTON reported that the proposed disabled parking bay was still shown on the plans in the centre of the lay-by outside One Stop although he had asked that it be moved towards the Pinfold Lane end of the lay-by. He also confirmed that the bus shelter for Old Court Hall had been approved and work would hopefully take place towards the end of the current financial year.

CLLR DUTTON confirmed work to replace the Chinese Bridge was now scheduled to take place in January.

CLLR DUTTON advised that plans were available to view on line for the future development of Chequers Court in Huntingdon.

CLLR WELLS arrived at 8.45

09/159 CORRESPONDENCE

The list of correspondence in Appendix A was considered.

THE MAYOR advised that a resident had written requesting the return of two wrought iron benches, previously sited on The Avenue. THE MAYOR would respond to confirm the benches had been considered as beyond economical repair and had been replaced with sturdy, comfortable benches although consideration would be given to obtaining a quote for repairs as part of ways to mark 2012.

09/160 FINANCIAL/ACCOUNTS

The list of payments to be made in Appendix B was approved. Councillors received a copy of the Petty Cash Reconciliation for the period to 19th November 2009; a copy of the budget report on the year to date, and a copy of the monthly bank reconciliation as verified by THE MAYOR.

09/161 PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

The applications and correspondence set out in Appendix C were considered. The Town Clerk would advise HDC of the Council's recommendations. CLLR DUTTON declared an interest in Planning matters, and did not take part in discussions.

09/162 HDC PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

In order to cut their costs, HDC have proposed handing responsibility for public conveniences to Town Councils, with effect from 1 April 2010. This would mean an additional cost to the Town Council of approximately £17,000 per annum to provide cleaning and maintenance services. It was AGREED that the Town Council would not accept responsibility for the public conveniences and the Town Clerk would write to HDC to confirm this decision.

09/163 FINANCE WORKING PARTY REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

CLLR Mrs WORTHINGTON drew the Town Council's attention to the key points in the report from the recent Finance Working Party and the list of recommendations. The following recommendations were AGREED:

That no more monies should be taken from the reserves in 2010/11;
That no application be made for a Small Scale Environmental Improvement Bid for 2010/11 as this would require a financial commitment from the council;
That the nationally agreed NALC pay scales for the Town Clerk and Town Clerk's Assistant, be accepted with immediate effect and backdated to 1 April 2009, and that one increment be awarded to the Town Clerk and Town Clerk's Assistant from 1 April 2010 (in line with their contracts of employment);
That the Town Office be closed to the public on Mondays with immediate effect;
That the Town Clerk purchase two publications at a cost of £67.20;
That CLLR CANT attends Councillor Professional Development Training at a cost of £52.58. It was further AGREED that as CLLR CANT will miss the following two Town Council meetings, as a result of the training sessions, that the reasons for his absence at the December and January Town Council meetings be ACCEPTED;
That the revised monthly financial actions list be adopted;
That the revised charges for hire of the Queen Elizabeth School, Judith's Field and charges for the London Road Cemetery be implemented from 1 April 2010;
That a formal response to the requests made by Jack and Jill pre-school be sent to advise a freeze on their rate of hire, provision of up to one free ad hoc session per month, and to confirm we would not enter into a licence agreement;
That a specification for the work to be carried out by the internal auditor be produced;
That the proposed budget be approved; it should be noted that the budget makes no provision for S137 or other grants in the next financial year; no allowance has been made towards 2012 but this will be reconsidered at the October budget review;
That the tender document in respect of a 3 year Grounds Maintenance contract is issued to 3 contractors and that 20 hanging baskets as installed as part of Godmanchester in Bloom be included in the Town Council maintenance for the following 3 years;
That the chimney breast in the Town Office be repaired and replastered at a cost of £180 and that redecoration of the Town Office will be undertaken by Town Council volunteers (cost of materials only).

CLLR BROWN offered thanks on behalf of the whole Council, to CLLR Mrs WORTHINGTON, CLLR WILSON and the Town Clerk for the detailed work they had undertaken to provide the budget for 2010/2011.

09/164 PRECEPT REQUEST

It was AGREED that a precept request in the sum of £136,000 would be submitted to HDC in respect of the year 2010-2011.

CLLR WILSON left at 10.42pm

09/165 COUNCILLORS RESPONSIBILITIES

The list of portfolios held by Councillors was discussed and amendments were AGREED. Town Clerk would issue the amended list to all Cllrs.

09/166 FORMATION OF COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

In the light of recent training undertaken by some Cllrs, there was concern that Cllrs at a working party might be considered as pre-determining an item, as their opinion would be formed before the matter was considered and a decision reached by the full council. The Town Clerk advised that predetermination only existed if a Cllr had made it public that they had made their mind up on an issue and would not consider further information or be willing to review or change their opinion. Although members of the public are not permitted to attend a Planning working party, they are advised when a planning matter is to be decided at a Town Council meeting, and therefore have the opportunity to express their views during the public participation session at the start of the meeting and before any decisions are made on planning matters. Those who have attended a Planning working party, may then consider such representations and amend their opinion accordingly before a decision is reached by the Council. It was therefore AGREED that the Planning working party would continue in its present form and not be formally constituted as a committee.

The Town Clerk advised it would be appropriate to form a Personnel working party to discuss in particular the terms and conditions for the Caretakers and CLLR Mrs WORTHINGTON and CLLR BUTCHER AGREED to look at Personnel issues with the Town Clerk.

09/167 DISABLED PARKING BAY

CLLR DUTTON confirmed that he had received confirmation from CCC that a second disabled parking bay on The Causeway would have to be paid for by the Town Council and it was AGREED that in line with previous budget discussions, that this was not viable at this time. CLLR BROWN advised that he had been in touch with HDC regarding a designated disabled parking bay in the Mill Yard car park, and they had confirmed they would look at providing a space at this end of the town.

09/168 PLAY PATHFINDER

CLLR Ms MIDDLETON had provided an update on the position regarding the bid for a Play Pathfinder grant and was pleased to confirm that Godmanchester Town Council had been successful and had been awarded £35,000 to provide play equipment at Judith's Field. The three stage plan is (1) The play pathfinder scheme is to be delivered by 31 March 2010 and will use up to £10,000 of S106 funding in addition to the £35,000 awarded. (2) It is hoped to progress the Multi Use Games Area by 30 June 2010 which will use match funding and further S106 money set aside for this purpose. (3) HDC have requested provision of some skate features to replace those lost as part of this second stage in order to release the S106 and

match funding they have committed. These three stages were AGREED. CLLR TAYLOR and CLLR Ms MIDDLETON are working with GMCiB to finalise the plans for natural features and the contractors who submitted tenders for the project have been advised of the outcome. Fenland Leisure has been advised we hope to issue a contract for provision of the play equipment in December. Meanwhile, CLLR Ms MIDDLETON will liaise with HDC to ensure we meet any planning regulations.

09/169 WINTER NEWSLETTER

Subject to a few minor amendments and additions, the draft newsletter was AGREED. CLLR MIDDLETON would pass the final copy to CLLR HYAMS who would work on the final proof (while on holiday in the USA). Cllrs were asked to assist in extra distribution to cover vacancies and holiday.

MISCELLEANOUS

CLLR BUTCHER advised he had spoken to the Youth Football Team Manager at Judith's Field and they had AGREED that ad hoc marking of the football pitch was acceptable rather than undertaking to mark the pitch on a regular basis.

HDC have adopted the Roman Way play area.

The Town Clerk thanked CLLR BROWN for clearing the blocked gutter on the water-side of the Town Hall, which had involved ladders and waders! The patch of damp plaster was now drying out in the Town Hall and would need attention in due course. A further problem with a blocked pipe had been dealt with by Dynorod, during the week.

THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING WILL BE HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2009 IN THE TOWN HALL

The meeting ended at 11.08pm Mayor