

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD
ON-LINE ON THURSDAY 20th AUGUST 2020**

PRESENT: R TAPLIN (Town Mayor)
Councillors: Mrs S WORTHINGTON (Deputy Mayor); G CAMPBELL; Mrs S CONBOY; A HOOKER; C HYAMS; P MORGAN; Mrs M RADFORD; P ROUND; C THOMAS; C VANE PERCY; Mrs S WILSON; G WILSON; J YOUNG

Town Clerk: Ms V PRYCE

No members of the public were present

MINUTES

Action

20/106 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE:

Cllr HLADKIWSKYJ - Holiday
Cllr IRVING – Holiday
Cllr MAHMOOD – None given

20/107 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

Cllr MORGAN – Planning Application 20/01327/HHFUL
Cllr VANE PERCY – MAGPAS Grant Application

20/108 MINUTES:

The MAYOR proposed the Council approve as a correct record the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 16th July, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

20/109 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The MAYOR advised that very little had been happening on Mayoral front. The MAYOR had attended Huntingdon Town Council's VJ day service and laid a wreath on behalf of the Council. The MAYOR thanked Cllr MORGAN for hoisting the Union Flag for VJ day and replacing it with the new Town flag the following day. Two events had been cancelled due to the pandemic and the USAF had postponed their Alconbury Wing reception from December until next April. Cllr MORGAN asked for the Mayor's thoughts on running the Civic Service, the MAYOR advised that he had set up a Zoom meeting with Rev. Busk and also intended to discuss plans with Godmanchester Remembers. The MAYOR added that he hoped to discuss the Remembrance Service also on Wednesday 2nd September. Cllr THOMAS advised that the formation of a working party, to be made up of the local organisations above was on the agenda.

20/110 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION:

None were in attendance.
The club 800 Draw took place with the assistance of the Mayoress.

20/111 OUTSTANDING ACTIONS:

Cllr G WILSON advised that he had not heard about the grant application made to the County Council but was not optimistic for the outcome. Cllr CONBOY voiced her disappointment, particularly as the Council had been asked to turn the detailed information around as soon as possible, and this had been provided within a matter of days.

20/112 CORRESPONDENCE:

Cllr CAMPBELL advised that correspondence had been received from a member of the public asking the Council if they would like to have some whips from the Woodland Trust. Cllr CAMPBELL advised that he felt that the whips would be too small to be sustainable and a response should be provided to reflect this.
Cllr WILSON advised that his planning reports did not include Mr Sheppard's various

Town Clerk

emails and asked the Town Clerk to advise Council of the situation. The Town Clerk reported that she had been receiving email correspondence from Mr Sheppard over a number of months regarding the MVAS, and that she had repeatedly explained to Mr Sheppard the Town Council's position, but Mr Sheppard continued to email and had now sent in a Freedom of Information request. In line with the Persistent and Vexatious Complaints Policy the Clerk had asked the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to form a working party to consider the correspondence received; the Clerk felt that the amount of time spent repeating information to Mr Sheppard was not in the tax payers' interest. Cllr HOOKER advised that Mr Sheppard had left a message on his answer machine asking him to call him back on environmental matters. Cllr S WILSON advised that should Mr Sheppard approach any other Town Councillors regarding anything to do with Council responsibility that he is referred to the Clerk and that no response should be given until the complaint group had been formed and given their advice. Cllr VANE PERCY further advised that Mr Sheppard had also knocked on his door and asked him about what the Council were doing about various matters. Cllr S WILSON advised that while the Council had agreed to write to Mr Sheppard in the past due to persistent correspondence on the same matter, that the letter had not been sent because he had he moved out of the town.

20/113 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT:

Cllr S WILSON advised she had attended the CCC Health Committee in her capacity as District Councillor on 6th August where Dr Liz Robin, Director of Public Health for Cambridgeshire clearly stated we are not 'out of the woods' yet. She strongly advised civic leaders to set an example to our residents by sticking strictly to guidelines, not stretching the boundaries, or taking unnecessary risks. That refers directly to town, parish, and district councils. Cllr S WILSON advised that the virus had been statistically higher in the Huntingdon area than the national average. She advised that the national average infection rate was rising again as were the figures in Cambridgeshire. The meeting agreed to Cllr S WILSON being appointed the 'Covid-19 Coordinator' for the Council.

Cllr S Wilson

20/114 FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTS:

20/114.1 & 20/114.2 The list of payments was approved.

20/114.3 Council noted the receipt of petty cash reconciliation to 31st July, monthly budget report on the year to date and monthly bank reconciliation.

Queries were raised about the gas and electric bills which were high when the buildings were closed. The Clerk advised that the bills were estimated, and that staff had been liaising with the utility company and the bills should reduce significantly in the future.

20/115 BUSINESS REPORT:

Cllr THOMAS advised that there were a number of projects being considered by Council and a significant amount of CIL money was available. The Infrastructure policy lays down guidelines for infrastructure projects circulated. Since he had received no further responses he asked the Council to accept it. The MAYOR proposed that the policy be accepted; all in were favour and it was so **resolved**.

Since it would not be possible to hold the Remembrance Day and Civic Service in their current format, the Business Portfolio proposed that a working party to be formed to include Godmanchester Remembers, the Comrades Club, and the Churches with the Mayor to discuss an appropriate way forward to mark both events. The MAYOR proposed the Council agree to form a working party; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

The Mayor

Cllr THOMAS advised that the Plant Nursery Business Plan had been drawn up and had been circulated to Cllrs. Cllr THOMAS suggested that a Nursery advisory steering group be formed to include staff, volunteers and members of the public with Cllr CONBOY leading its creation. Cllr CONBOY advised that she expected the group to form by September/October but needed to check the groundwork. The MAYOR proposed that the Nursery advisory steering group be formed; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr Conboy

Cllr THOMAS advised that a MAGPAS grant application had been received and advised that in line with Council Policy the maximum amount for national and non-local organisations that the Council could award was £50.00. The MAYOR proposed the Council award a grant of £50.00 to MAGPAS; the majority were in favour, and it was so **resolved**.

Town Clerk

Cllr THOMAS advised that the portfolio group had discussed the possibility of a single point of focus to assist Council for the interpretation and implementation of Covid-19 related policies would be useful and Cllr S WILSON had offered her services. The MAYOR asked if this was advisory or executive authority, Cllr THOMAS advised that no Cllr had executive authority. The MAYOR proposed that Cllr S WILSON assume the role; the majority were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr S Wilson

Cllr THOMAS advised Council that information received from NALC had advised that the expectation was that the Council would continue to hold remote meetings until May 2021 and to suspend most business until next year. Given the circumstances and in the absence of any other Cllrs putting themselves forward, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor had agreed to extend their post until May 2021. The MAYOR proposed that Council agree the position; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr WORTHINGTON asked Council to thank Cllr S WILSON for her work on the Coronavirus Risk Assessments.

20/116 CHARGING FOR COUNCIL LAND FACILITIES:

Cllr WORTHINGTON circulated a paper which had been discussed at the Business Portfolio meeting and invited views on how the Council should construct charges in a simplified manner. Following a recent private hire request, Cllr WORTHINGTON asked whether Council should be allowing private hire of the MUGA and rather than subsidise skatepark lessons, charge for its use if the person using it was running a business from it. Cllr HYAMS suggested that hirers could pay quarterly rather than annually. Cllr CAMPBELL queried what the Council hoped to achieve in charging people for this and asked if it was to raise money and felt that the office time taken administering the charges would be significant. He added that at a time where the community were dealing with the Covid outbreak, the Council should be encouraging people to be fit and healthy, and also asked how the Council would enforce the charges. Cllr VANE PERCY advised that the owner of the Canoe Hire had woken him up at 6.15am one day to ask for the keys to the bollard; it was noted that they keys in the codebox had not been returned.

Cllr MORGAN agreed that the MUGA was a fantastic facility which had cost the Council a lot of money and for the most part it invariably empty and was fully in support of its use by a netball team. Cllr S WILSON agreed that she too would be happy that the netball team could hire it for an hour at a time and the Council would need to advertise its use, to ensure residents would be aware of when it was being hired. Cllr S WILSON felt Council should charge for the facilities due to the maintenance costs and referred to the goal keeping training which had been damaging the surface at Judith's Field and which the Council pays to maintain. Cllr WORTHINGTON advised that an increasing number of Councils were implementing a charging policy due to the amount of people using the land and these groups were impinging on the use of the space by members of public. She felt that not charging for use could be seen as an unfair subsidy, if business owners are charged for using other facilities such as the halls.

Cllr HYAMS commented that local facilities were paid for by Godmanchester tax payer so individuals should be able to use them when they like, and that the goalkeeping trainer had been telling members of the public not to use the area that he was using. Cllr CAMPBELL felt that Council was opening up a big bureaucratic issue which the office would have to deal with and asked that the policy was not put in place until the end of the pandemic. Cllr THOMAS reminded Council that it was a discussion item with the idea to get some input for Cllr WORTHINGTON to progress her thoughts and it was not the intention to resolve the situation or apply charges during the current Covid situation.

Cllr
Worthington

20/117 OUTDOOR CINEMA EVENT:

Cllr RADFORD acknowledged that it had been a difficult time for many people in Godmanchester. The Community Association had been disappointed not to be able to hold the Gala Day, and the Council's Xmas Market had also been cancelled and so proposed that an outdoor cinema event, similar to that held at the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, be held in Godmanchester on 12th September. Government guidelines were leaving many decisions to individuals along lines of spectators of outdoor sports and were asking people to limit numbers to six-person groupings and spread out in line with government guidance. All safety measures would be employed, including an online booking system through Eventbrite. Residents would provide names and addresses of people in their party and contact numbers and a declaration from attendees that they were not suffering from any symptoms. There would be segregated pods, in line with government guidelines available. Discussion took place over pod allocation and choice, the location of toilet provision and the number of stewards required. Two films would be shown over a limited period of time. Cllr CONBOY suggested some families would use the opportunity as a social occasion and would bring alcohol and some may get carried away, so security should be considered. Cllr THOMAS raised concerns over the two-way traffic system over the Chinese bridge.

The MAYOR advised that there was no control over members of the public visiting the site at any time to walk dogs or socialize, and they were then required to exercise common sense. In addition, advice from two security firms was that, for a family-oriented gathering, SIA marshals would probably give the wrong message. Cllr VANE PERCY felt that it was irresponsible not to consider security guards. Cllr S WILSON felt that while the cinema was a fantastic idea the venue chosen was very different to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, who had numerous paid staff on site and plenty of volunteers, but she also had concerns with people passing over the Chinese Bridge and asked how 500+ members of the public passing through would be managed not including the general public. The MAYOR advised that as the Council had not yet agreed to holding the event, it was still too early to recruit volunteers. Cllr S WILSON asked Cllrs to remember that the Council should be setting an example by sticking strictly to the guidelines, not to stretch boundaries and not taking unnecessary risks. Cllr HYAMS congratulated Cllr RADFORD and the MAYOR for their efforts and advised he would support the event in the way of publicity but would not attend as he was concerned about marshalling and other loose ends that were of concern. The MAYOR advised that he felt the Council were not content with the paper and asked Cllr RADFORD to pull her paper, which she did. The MAYOR thanked Cllr RADFORD for her hard work and Cllr HLADKIWSKYJ for his work on the booking system.

Cllr G WILSON requested that rather than withdraw the proposal the MAYOR allowed Council to vote. The MAYOR advised that as a recorded vote had been requested, he did not want to advertise names of Cllrs who may not wish to support the proposal.

20/118 PLANNING REPORT:

Clerk to advise HDC of planning application recommendations.

Cllr G WILSON discussed the LHI bid via CCC to add double yellow lines along parts of the east side of London Road, Cllr S WILSON and Cllr G WILSON had liaised with some of the residents and had received four emails confirming that they would support the suggested action. Another resident had advised that they were likely to object. However, the CCC would be carrying out their own consultation. Cllr WORTHINGTON asked if any thought been given to where the displaced vehicles would park as it is not good to move the problem elsewhere. Cllr G WILSON advised that many properties had parking at the back of their properties which was often unused, and that the lack of visibility on London Road due to parking issues would be improved with measures put in place. The MAYOR proposed that the Council submit an LHI bid to add double yellow lines to parts of the east side of London Road; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Town Clerk

Cllr G Wilson

Cllr G WILSON discussed the transport study which would provide the Council with a Transport Plan and asked Council to agree a specification to produce a Transport Plan for

Godmanchester to enable Council to approach a list of consultants. He advised that the Highways Agency had provided minor details, and the Council had a budget of £10k to produce the study; if this might be exceeded the portfolio would return to Council. Cllr HYAMS asked if the Council could approach HDC for a contribution towards any highway improvement from their CIL reserves and added that Kimbolton Parish Council had been successful in acquiring money for a pedestrian crossing. Cllr G WILSON advised that the Town Council could apply to both County and District Council for funding once the Council had established a list of priority issues for the Town. The MAYOR proposed that in principle the outline specification should be sought the following week; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr G Wilson

Cllr G WILSON discussed the pop up cycle way as, prior to the meeting, he had sent around the latest draft from the County Council's plan and a previous a report which had been circulated which had concluded there were no shared bridge solutions available to allow cyclists to go over the ancient bridge alongside vehicles. The only viable option would be to try closing the bridge to traffic. Cllr G WILSON believed this would be worth trialing, once the A1307 was complete, to provide a safer, socially-distanced route for pedestrians and cyclists going in and out of Huntingdon. Clearly, more consultation would be required with residents, the emergency services and bus companies using the route. Cllr WORTHINGTON added that there had been a lot of controversy on some of the emergency measures that had been used to facilitate cycling and walking and the main complaint was that residents hadn't been consulted. Cllr S WILSON asked Cllr G WILSON to confirm to if there had been any consultation with the public and the emergency services. Cllr G WILSON advised that to date, this had not been carried out.

Cllr CAMPBELL felt that this was a once in lifetime opportunity for the Town to try and see if it would work and that, if it did not, it could be scrapped. Cllr HYAMS queried the effect the closure of the bridge would have on the Traffic Plan. Cllr CONBOY asked that if the Council found in favour she, alongside Cllr WORTHINGTON would like the Council to explain to residents why the Council had not had the opportunity to consult the public. The MAYOR proposed the Council show support for the closure of the bridge to allow pedestrianised access, assuming relevant agencies were in agreement; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr G Wilson

Cllr G WILSON advised that the Portfolio was seeking advice on the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that it was heading in the right direction, and we were required to update its maps and its policies.

20/119 PROPERTY REPORT:

Cllr CAMPBELL advised that the Town Clerk had advertised the public toilet tender on Contract Finder and had also contacted a number of public toilet providers who had shown an interest in tendering. He advised the deadline for applications to tender was the 21st September and advised the Council that a Contract Administrator would need to be appointed.

Cllr CAMPBELL advised that a quote had been accepted to install additional pigeon spikes at the Town Hall.

Cllr CAMPBELL noted the serious problems that the Council had had with the public toilet. Council had opened the toilet when lockdown measures were lifted but it had now been closed for some time. The Town Clerk advised that there had been difficulties finding a plumber who would visit the site and was willing to take on the work as it was a complex system, and further issues arose with sourcing the part. However, work continued to resolve the matter.

Cllr CAMPBELL asked Council if they wished to continue to fund subsidised Let's Go Skate lessons at the skatepark. He advised Council that the Town Clerk had entered into discussions with the owner of the club who had subsequently decided to discontinue the

lessons. The MAYOR advised that it was discovered that residents from neighbouring Towns and Parishes were benefitting from the subsidised lessons and proposed that the Council did not continue to subsidise lessons at this time; the majority were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

20/120 ENVIRONMENT REPORT:

Cllr HOOKER presented his report. He advised that he had not sent the minutes of the portfolio group as he had assumed the Clerk would circulate them in place of an Environment Report. Cllr HOOKER reminded Council that an Extraordinary Council meeting would be held on 2nd September at 19.00hrs, to include discussion on a Logworld Replacement, Willow Walk and the Skatepark extension (Multi-wheel Fun Track) as well as items from the Personnel Team.

The meeting closed at 21.30.