

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD  
ON-LINE ON WEDNESDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020**

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

Town Clerk: Ms V PRYCE

No members of the public were present

**MINUTES**

Action

**20/121 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE:**

Cllr S CONBOY – Holiday  
Cllr MAHMOOD – Absent  
Cllr VANE PERCY – Absent

**20/122 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

None

**20/123 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION:**

No members of the public were present.

The MAYOR advised that the Covid-19 Group – which comprised the Timebank, the Mutual-Aid Group and the Foodbank in addition to the Town Council - had received a County Council Chairman's Commendation and he thanked everyone involved in the group.

The MAYOR gave his sincere thanks to all of those who had participated in the Garage Sale and advised that it had raised over £650 and money was still coming in which, after expenses, should clear £550 for his charities. The MAYOR thanked all the stall holders, including Cllrs WORTHINGTON, HOOKER and RADFORD and those who helped in the town office, the help from Clair and Julie and Cllr IRVING for the advertisement boards which were well received by residents. The MAYOR advised that a major benefit was that people had had the opportunity to go out and meet people.

**20/124 MULTI WHEEL FUN TRACK:**

Cllr CAMPBELL advised that the Property Portfolio had been researching the Multi Wheel Fun Track (MWFT) for a considerable amount of time, and he felt that the space next to the Skate Park would be an ideal site for the project, and that planning permission was not required. The design was to be established by the Steering Committee which comprised of three Town Cllrs, members of the public and users of the Skate Park. Cllr CAMPBELL recommended that a simple tender exercise was all that was needed to start the process, and suggested an outline cost parameter of £80,000. He felt that the tender documents could be determined by Cllrs and it would ask providers what they can build for £80,000 - with a caveat if there was more, or less, money available what changes could be made. The Contractor would be required to carry out the design and build and a Contract Administrator would be required to oversee the contract. Hopefully, there would be very little work for the town office. The track would be built with a recycled tyre surface and may reduce maintenance in terms of grass cutting etc. Cllr HYAMS enquired as to what CCTV capability would be provided. Cllr CAMPBELL advised that the CCTV may need to be extended to cover the area, and there was no allowance for lighting included in the budget. The MAYOR asked about Cllr CAMPBELL's previous suggestion of trying to find

Signed:

Dated:

additional grants for this work rather than having to use the council's own money and asked what leads there were. Cllr CAMPBELL advised that any chance of grant would need documentary support from the public. Cllr CAMPBELL advised that to apply for grants the job needs to be committed to by the council and he did not believe that we would get grants towards it, particularly since considerable funding had been made towards the Skate Park.

Cllr CAMPBELL addressed the issue of the limitations of maintaining the ground around the MWFT once it was installed and advised Council that the small areas of grass left behind add to the attractiveness and should be easily strimmed. Cllr CAMPBELL produced an activity schedule to highlight where the workload was likely to fall. Cllr CAMPBELL advised that he would be responsible for the tender document, and the tenders to be sent out and received back. A Contract Administrator appointed from the outset of the project, would sign off various stages of the Contractor's work and authorise invoices until the project was concluded. Cllr S WILSON asked about the effect on the residents at Romans Way as there had been issues in that area previously. Cllr CAMPBELL acknowledged that there was an issue with an access point which goes past a bungalow on Romans Way but that this issue was a Judith's Field issue not a specific Skate Park issue. There was a discussion about the need to consult residents about Council ideas, a view strongly held by Cllr S WORTHINGTON, as opposed to the view that councilors were elected to make such decisions on behalf of the residents, a view equally strongly held by Cllr HLADKIWSKYJ. Cllr HLADKIWSKYJ asked if there had been any increase in complaints about litter from Romans Way; the Clerk advised that there had been additional litter at the Skate Park and that staff were constantly up there addressing the issue, but the complaints were not from Romans Way. Cllr MORGAN asked about improving the entrance to Judith's Field from Romans Way as it was a muddy track. The MAYOR reminded Council that the Trustees have already resisted any rights of way being made, and Council should be taking action to put a gate there or create a natural barrier to impede the way through from time to time to stop a Right of Way being created.

Cllr CAMPBELL advised Council that he felt it our patriotic duty to progress with public expenditure to help to revive the economy. Cllr CAMPBELL acknowledged that there were issues with office time and recruitment but he felt that now was the time to now go ahead with more than one project. Cllr CAMPBELL asked that the Council move the project to the next stage and advertise the tender on Contract Finder. The MAYOR proposed that the Council commit finances to the MWFT project at some point; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr THOMAS reminded the Council that at this point this was a decision in principle. The Clerk sought clarification that the Council were committing to funding the project entirely from CIL and that grants would not be sought. Cllr CAMPBELL advised that he could apply for grants, the Clerk advised that the grant process was far more complicated than just applying and requires constant reporting back at various stages of the project to the contributor.

**PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC: It was resolved that in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and by reason of the confidential nature of the remainder of the business, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting.**

#### **20/125 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:**

Cllr S WORTHINGTON advised that the Terms of Reference for the Personnel Committee had been circulated and asked Council to approve. The MAYOR proposed that Council adopted the Terms of Reference and all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr S WORTHINGTON advised that the national pay scale points had been agreed by unions and NALC and as a Council we are committed to implementing it. A 2.75% NALC increase had been agreed, while the Personnel Committee had only budgeted for a 2% increase. However, there was sufficient flexibility within the budget to cover the increase

which would total £2599 for all staff for a full year. The MAYOR asked if pensions should be reviewed at the same time. Cllr S WORTHINGTON advised that the pensions percentages had already been set for the financial year and increased amounts resulting from the pay award were small and covered in the budget.

Cllr S WORTHINGTON advised that the Personnel Committee had discussed staff working from home and had concluded it was not practical to return to the office at this time. There was a concern from some Cllrs that staff were not pulling their weight at home. It was difficult to counter this concern, since a lot of the work that is carried out by office staff is carried out behind the scenes. Cllr S WORTHINGTON advised that the Personnel Committee had looked at this and were satisfied that staff were working efficiently and effectively. Cllr HYAMS advised that the Clerk was the line manager and that everything should be directed to her, and noted his upset that Cllrs would question what the staff were doing since generally people working from home often tended to work far more efficiently.

Cllr S WORTHINGTON advised that NALC had also agreed a further day's annual leave for staff who had worked for less than five years; this would be discussed at the next Personnel Meeting.

#### **20/126 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:**

Three nominees had been identified to fill the vacancy on the Personnel Committee, Cllrs HOOKER, HYAMS and MAHMOOD. Cllrs were asked to email their vote for one of the three nominees to the Clerk by the 4<sup>th</sup> September. {Secretary's Note: Cllr HOOKER was subsequently elected}

#### **20/127 WILLOW WALK:**

Cllr HOOKER advised that he had been contacted by Mr Sheppard suggesting the provision of disabled access around the recreation ground which had inspired him to give the suggestion more thought. He advised that a natural footpath had been created following the silt removal and clearing of the area. A bespoke permit (costing £1000) from the Environment Agency would be required - and it took a year to get one for the silting process - but felt that he was more experienced in this area now so the process would not take quite as long. As the project was estimated at £22,000 the Council could follow the simple tender process. The MAYOR asked if there would be a problem with it being a hard service as opposed to a permeable surface; Cllr HOOKER had spoken to the Environment Agency who had indicated that it should not be an issue as there was already tarmac on the recreation ground and the footpath would be on the higher ground and less likely to flood. Cllr S WILSON enquired as to why do the Council needed any permission from the Environment Agency as the land is Council land. Cllr HOOKER advised that it is because it was considered a flood plain and requires the same process as the Community Association carried out for the dredging.

Cllr MORGAN voiced his interest in the alternative to tarmac being rubber crumb and asked if it was available in a number of colours and Council could make the footpath special colour. Cllr S WORTHINGTON noted that there was a lot for young people in the Town and was pleased that this project would appeal to another group of people. Cllr IRVING asked if any wheelchair users had been consulted. Cllr HOOKER advised that one of the difficulties he had about consulting was that if he discussed the potential projects hopes may be raised and the projects may not be delivered. Discussion took place around extending the pathway to cover the whole of the recreation ground, Cllr HOOKER advised that he would be able to provide an estimate of potential costs and would advise council. Cllr S WORTHINGTON supported the suggestion about involving wheelchair users in the design as it was easy, even with the best of intentions to not get things absolutely right. Cllr CAMPBELL advised that there was an official disabled advisory group within the County Council which would be worth approaching. Cllr HOOKER advised that he would send the quote details to the group at the County Council.

The MAYOR asked the council if – first - that they supported the concept; secondly, whether the Council would like Cllr HOOKER to apply for a waiver from the Environment Agency; and, third, asked if this was considered a higher or lower priority than the MWPT. Cllr CAMPBELL felt that none of the projects should be put on hold at this point and that all projects should move to the next stage. The MAYOR noted that view and advised that the purpose of setting priorities was simply to help staff when there was a limit on their available time. Cllr CAMPBELL felt that things could move on with background work as Cllr HOOKER already has. The MAYOR advised that it had to be recognised that they cannot all go ahead in parallel at this moment – work was already being carried out for the Judith' Field public toilet by the office staff and, when they had capacity, we can move down the list of proposed projects. Cllr HLADKIWSKYJ advised that he felt that we could start all projects with initial work being carried out, keeping as much work away from the office as possible. The Clerk advised that the portfolio groups set out their work for the following year when setting the budget and that this allows the Personnel Portfolio decide what staffing is required and she did not understand the urgency to do all of the work at once and suggested that they be put in to the business plan. Cllr THOMAS agreed that a priority should be established. Cllr G WILSON advised that he felt that there was sufficient capacity with the Cllrs to carry out the background work. However, Cllr G WILSON also advised that if the Council were awarded the grant from CCC for the Plant Nursery it would create a lot of work for the office staff and Nursery Manager.

The MAYOR reiterated that The Town Clerk and her staff have a limited number of hours and were subsequently limited on the amount of work they take on, not forgetting they must fulfil their statutory duties. Cllr S WORTHINGTON asked if there were time constraints on spending the grant from the CCC if the Council were awarded it. Cllr G WILSON advised that there would be an expectation for the work to be carried out relatively swiftly, and suggested that the Nursery Manager should be able to manage the project at the Nursery.

The MAYOR proposed that the Council support the Willow Walk project; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**. The MAYOR proposed that Cllr HOOKER proceed with the application to the Environment Agency; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**. The MAYOR proposed that Willow Walk would be a higher priority than the MWFT; the majority were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

#### **20/128 LOG WORLD REPLACEMENT:**

Cllr HOOKER reminded Council that, in 2017, the Council agreed to add a budget line to put money aside to replace Log World and agreed to its likely replacement in 2021/22. So far £20,000 had been put in an earmarked reserve. The Town Office had contacted various play equipment providers and Cllr HOOKER attended five appointments with interested parties. One provider gave an example of play equipment that could be provided in a different location on the Rec which would cater for children that did not like only standard equipment such as swing and slide equipment; their suggested equipment provided hideaway areas, a slide, freestanding pieces and an unsprung jump section. The suggested new location would not flood as Log World does, and it could also provide free entertainment for children on Gala Day and Picnic in the Park. Cllr HOOKER advised that he would carry out all of the work but would include the office in any correspondence.

Due to the suggested cost of the project the Council would be required to follow the EU tendering procedure and would also need to apply for planning permission. Cllr HOOKER advised that he would like to see this equipment installed and ready for the next Gala weekend, and to do this a planning application needed to be submitted by the end of September, the information needed to be added to Contract Finder, and the order for the equipment needed to be in place by the end of January. Cllr THOMAS stressed Cllr S WORTHINGTON's previous point about public consultation. Cllr S WORTHINGTON reminded council of the opposition to the previously suggested Amphitheatre of Trees.

The MAYOR advised that Log World would remain while there is any life in it, and that it

would not be replaced following its eventual removal. Cllr IRVING advised that local resident Cllr VANE PERCY felt that if the poles were painted green the eye would be drawn right through the design, and thus it would be unlikely to cause a visual concern.

The MAYOR proposed that the Council agreed to proceed with the preferred play equipment style by seeking alternative tenders; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**. The MAYOR proposed that Cllr HOOKER be permitted to prepare the case to apply for planning permission; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**. The MAYOR then proposed that it be prioritised over Willow Walk; the majority were against, it was so **rejected**. The MAYOR finally proposed that the play equipment was prioritised over the MWFT; the majority were against and it was so **rejected**.

To conclude, the MAYOR advised that the first priority would be Willow Walk, the second would be the Multi Wheel Fun Track and the third would be the Log World Replacement. Any work that Cllrs wished to carry out that does not employ the town office staff, can be carried out at this stage.

There was then considerable discussion over the meaning and implication of the priorities decided, and some sponsoring Cllrs were unhappy with the outcome. The MAYOR reminded all Cllrs that all projects had been agreed in principle, and that they could all go ahead to the next stage; the entire purpose of defining priorities was so that Office staff knew where they needed to apply their effort when their time was limited. Cllr CAMPBELL advised that he had taken the MWFT as far as he could and it now needed to move on to the next stage of advertising on Contract Finder., he felt that the meeting was not a satisfactory way to go about it. He advised he was not content to prioritise the projects and putting projects off for five years was not satisfactory. The MAYOR advised it has not been deferred indefinitely or at all. The Council should start with applying for Willow Walk and when capacity allows the Council could plan for another project. In terms of priority Council had agreed on Willow Walk and then the MWFT all dependent on resources being available the Council would then begin to the log world replacement. Cllr YOUNG advised that he found it difficult to vote on the matters and put to them in a priority and asked why all three projects could start simultaneously all of these projects are still given all possible encouragement. Cllr HYAMS advised he was unsure where we go from here, and asked if there was a plan of action for starting dates; what is now required is for someone to put down on a spreadsheet exactly what we need to do.

The MAYOR advised that following the publication of the minutes and after the various Portfolios have met we can feed this information into the town office for the forward plan in the agreed order. However, if the Council receive the funding from CCC for the Plant Nursery this might displace one or more of these projects. Cllr CAMPBELL asked again that the council go to Contract Finder for the MWFT. Cllr HOOKER advised it is the Town Clerk that would have to apply to Contract Finder and would also have her work increased significantly if we were successful with the CCC grant funding bid. Cllr S WORTHINGTON emphasised the importance of prioritization and said that all businesses and organisations have to do it, however difficult, and it was counterproductive to pretend otherwise.

**PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 RE-ADMITTANCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC. It was resolved that the confidential business having been concluded, the Press and Public be re-admitted to the meeting.**

The Meeting concluded at 21.07hrs

