

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD
ON-LINE ON THURSDAY 15th OCTOBER 2020**

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

Town Clerk: Ms V PRYCE
Minute Taker: Mrs C WHITLOCK

Three members of the public

MINUTES

Action

20/152 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE:

Mrs WORTHINGTON (Deputy Mayor) – apologies given
Cllr HOOKER – joined the meeting at 7.20pm
Cllr VANE PERCY – apologies given
Cllr HLADKIWSKYJ left the meeting at 8.05pm

20/153 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None received

20/154 MINUTES:

The MAYOR proposed the Council approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 17th September and the minutes of the Extraordinary meetings held on 2nd, 10th and 25th September (not 20th as detailed in the Agenda). All were in favour and it was so resolved.

20/155 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The MAYOR advised that he had very little to report this month other than to say he had participated in Huntingdon Town Council's Mayor Making Ceremony which had been conducted via Zoom.

The MAYOR advised he had been involved in the discussions for Remembrance Day which would be discussed under the Business Portfolio item.

20/156 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION:

The Mayor welcomed and introduced three members of the public to the meeting; Mr David Wiggam, Mr Ahmed and Mr Page.

Mr David Wiggam, Director of Child Care spoke in support of the planning application for the conversion of a residential property at 3 Cow Lane to a children's day nursery. Currently Mr Wiggam was responsible for five nurseries which had been graded as 'outstanding' by Ofsted. He felt there was a need for an additional nursery based on the organisation's local experience of operating in the Godmanchester area. The opportunity for child care early years, future developments and a support provision for Godmanchester families, including providing extra funding for child care would be an asset. He advised that the property in Cow Lane was chosen as alternative areas had tended to be in commercial or semi industrial locations. The Cow Lane property would require minimal changes to the front of the property, it would provide onsite parking for staff as well as customers and there would be the benefit of the nature reserve on the doorstep too. The position of the nursery from the A1198 and the A1307, when open, would provide good access. The MAYOR thanked Mr Wiggam for his presentation and confirmed that he would be happy to meet with him.

Mr Ahmed from Accent Housing spoke in support for the planning application to build affordable housing on the land on the west side of the A1198 and behind 29 - 31 Pettit Road. He reported

that he had met with Jon Collen and Frank Mastrandrea from Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) to discuss the need for affordable housing for rent in the area. A Local Lettings Policy would need to be in place to support the demand for housing and 50% of residents would be involved in the process. The housing officer at Accent Housing would provide tenancies under a sustainable scheme. The Housing Association were G1 V1 rated and had secured a £3.2m grant towards the scheme. He hoped that if the Council's concerns had been satisfied, to enable a recommendation for approval, then they would be able to meet the targets set by the grant.

The MAYOR asked whether Mr Page wished to speak but Mr Page advised that he was there as an observer.

The club 800 Draw took place with the assistance of the Mayoress.

20/157 OUTSTANDING ACTIONS:

Cllr G WILSON asked if the item regarding access to Judith's Field could be removed from the Outstanding Actions. The Town Wardens had been maintaining the gate from the A1198 through to the field so he no longer wished to pursue David Wilson Homes (DWH) to carry out any repairs.

Town Clerk

The TOWN CLERK confirmed that she would be meeting Mike Westcott-Rudd on Friday (16 October) at 9.30am to progress the registration of the Council's land.

Cllr CAMPBELL had recently met with the fish pass designers to discuss the drawings for the Mill Steps project. The situation was progressing quite well; details of the improvements to the appearance of the area were now required. Cllr CAMPBELL advised that it was hoped work would start in February 2021.

20/158 CORRESPONDENCE:

The MAYOR reiterated he had been invited to and attended the Huntingdon Town Council's Mayor Making Ceremony on Zoom. The dates for the Twinning meetings had been noted in the Mayor's diary and he confirmed he would be attending them. The Mayor of St Ives had launched a charity time capsule requesting contributions to be buried and/or monetary donations. The MAYOR advised that he would be sending a personal donation. A number of 'Save the Dates' invitations for various events had also been received.

The MAYOR advised that John Thackray (Godmanchester in Bloom) had thanked the Council for all the work they had been put into making the town look good especially during the lockdown period. The MAYOR made a point of thanking Fergusons for their hard work and involvement too. Cllr CAMPBELL thanked Fergusons for their hanging baskets. He also wished to thank Godmanchester in Bloom for all their hard work with their planters and maintaining the champagne terrace and the roses.

20/159 PROPERTY PORTFOLIO MATTERS:

Cllr CAMPBELL advised that it had been decided not to reopen the Council buildings following Cllr S WILSON's Covid report and the TOWN CLERK's subsequent letter to the hirers. The group would reconsider the situation later in the year. Cllr CAMPBELL commented that some other parishes had opened their halls; some with and some without success.

Cllr CAMPBELL advised that tender details for the public toilets at Judith's Field had been posted on Contract Finder by the TOWN CLERK. Two tenders had been received from specialists namely; Healthmatic (£74,000) and Danfo (£110,000). Due to the substantial difference between the quotes, the MAYOR and Cllr CAMPBELL met with Healthmatic to clarify a couple of points with them. Cllr CAMPBELL confirmed, having met Healthmatic, he was confident in appointing them. They would be happy to use zinc rather than sedum to match the pavilion with either a flat or pitched roof. Cllr CAMPBELL had discussed some modifications to reduce the service area to make better use of the footprint. Cllr G WILSON asked for clarification on the cost of these additional items and whether they would fall within the budget of £80k. A discussion took place over whether the budget of £80k included VAT or whether that would be on top of the original figure. Cllr S WILSON queried whether the Council would be able to claim the VAT back. The TOWN

CLERK confirmed that they would be able to do so. The budget, therefore, did not include VAT. Cllr CAMPBELL confirmed that if the decision was to have a zinc roof, which would incur an additional £2k, this would still fall within budget. Healthmatic would need to apply for planning permission with the view to being on site after Christmas. The foundations, drains and services would need to be prepared but the unit would be constructed offsite and craned into position. The public toilets would be in situ for the summer holidays, if not by the Easter holidays. The MAYOR advised that a contract administrator would be employed at an additional cost. One of the tenders received was for less than £2,500 but they would also charge per site visit. Cllr CAMPBELL confirmed he required agreement to appoint someone and the figure of £3,000 would give the freedom to choose the most appropriate person. The MAYOR proposed the Council should appoint Healthmatic as the contractor for the public toilets at Judith's Field; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**. The MAYOR proposed the Council should appoint a contract administrator at the additional cost of up to £3,000 plus VAT; all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

20/160 ENVIRONMENT REPORT:

Cllr HOOKER joined the meeting at 7.20pm and apologised for his lateness which was due to another meeting.

To try to reduce costs, Cllr HOOKER had looked into alternative ways to make repairs to Queens Walk play area fencing which had been identified by FLP. However, this could not be achieved more cheaply and therefore he wished to go ahead with the quote from FLP. The MAYOR proposed that the quote from FLP to replace 13 posts at Queens Walk play area at a cost of £2,105.55 plus VAT be accepted. All were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr HOOKER reported that the hanging baskets had abruptly been taken down in the town whilst they were still in full bloom. Hence the Grounds Maintenance retender document had been updated to give the TOWN CLERK the control of when the baskets were removed.

Cllr HOOKER confirmed that a request for an Environment Agency permit for Willow Walk had been submitted and he was waiting to find out how much the permit would cost (approximately £1,000) which would be taken from CIL expenditure. Cllr HOOKER advised that the Skyworld play equipment requirement had been posted on Contract Finder; enquiries had been received.

Cllr HOOKER advised that a request from the public had been received to look at providing a recycling bin at the Nursery for the public. The Nursery Committee were not keen for it to be positioned there, due to the type of products they were proposing to recycle (tetra packs) so the Environment Portfolio group agreed that they would not support the request. The MAYOR suggested that the individuals considered should be advised that the Nursery was not a suitable location nor big enough to accommodate a bin of this description. The MAYOR proposed that the request for a recycling bin at the Nursery be refused. All were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr HOOKER reported that the riverbank along the east of the recreation ground was in need of repair. Cllr HOOKER asked if they would support contacting HDC with the request that they repair the whole bank. The TOWN CLERK had spoken to Operations at HDC and had sent them photos to show the areas where repairs were required. The MAYOR thanked Cllr HOOKER and all those involved in the cleaning up process and improving the facilities in the town, particularly the bathing area on the recreation ground.

Cllr HOOKER advised that, at the last meeting, the Ground Maintenance tender document required a couple of amendments to include an extra bin (where the new Skyworld would be located). As No 7 lifebuoy was not in an appropriate place, Cllr HOOKER confirmed that it had been agreed to reposition it to the cleared area, near the steps, where it would be visible. In addition to this, as the tender agreement detailed that the herbicide be carried out 7 times a year; it would be removed from the document as that area was now nettle free and would not revert.

20/161 BUSINESS & FINANCE PORTOLIO MATTERS:

Cllr MORGAN raised concerns over the high utility bills for buildings which had not been in use

since March. The TOWN CLERK advised that the bills had now reduced as actual readings were being submitted on a monthly basis. However, the gas bill at QES was still high and would be investigated.

Town Clerk

Cllr RADFORD referred to the plumber's invoice of £60. The TOWN CLERK advised that this was to attend a leak at Judith's Field which she would try to claim back from Hutchinsons who had carried out the refurbishment at the Pavilion.

Town Clerk

The list of payments were approved.

Cllr S
Conboy/Cllr
M Radford

20/162 BUSINESS REPORT:

Cllr THOMAS advised that he and the MAYOR had looked into various options with regards to having some kind of Remembrance Day event. Although under the current Covid rules a group of up to 30 people could socially distance outside, the Council would not be able to protect the public should they wish to pay their respects. Rev D Busk and Cllr YOUNG had felt the best option would be at 11am on Remembrance Sunday for the MAYOR to lay a wreath on behalf of the Council, Cllr YOUNG would act as the preacher, and all uniformed service people would be represented by a single standard bearer at the War Memorial. The MAYOR advised that the wreath laying would not now be filmed.

The MAYOR advised that up to 50 individuals from all of the other groups would be invited by Rev Busk to attend a church service in the evening of Remembrance Sunday. Those in attendance would be able to lay their wreaths at the church, which would later be placed at the War Memorial on their behalf.

Cllr YOUNG advised that the national movement was be for the public to stand in silence on their doorsteps at 11am on Remembrance Sunday. Cllr CONBOY asked the MAYOR what the dress code would be for Councillors standing on their own doorsteps. The MAYOR advised that he would not be robed at the War Memorial and that, as it was individual's own homes, it would be their choice. Cllr YOUNG confirmed that the morning service at 11am was the responsibility of the TOWN CLERK and the MAYOR to arrange. Cllr MORGAN raised concerns over the evening service on Remembrance Sunday and asked that invitations should be distributed as soon as possible to ensure the right people were asked and to give people notice. The MAYOR confirmed that a list of 15 or 16 organisations from the town have been given to Rev Busk. The MAYOR proposed that the Council agree that a small service would take place at the War Memorial to mark the day and he would advise the public, via Facebook and the Council's website, to pay their respects in silence on their doorsteps at 11am. The majority were in favour, and so it was **resolved**.

The Mayor

Cllr THOMAS advised that Business Group had agreed to purchase and set up the Christmas tree as it was in line with the budget.

The template for the 5 Year Rolling Business Plan had been produced and populated and would be circulated by the TOWN CLERK in due course.

Town Clerk

Cllr THOMAS thanked those who had been involved in reducing the Council policy list from 97 to 25 and confirmed that the cull still continues. Suggested policy responsibilities will hopefully be presented at November's meeting for approval. Assuming the Property Portfolio Group decides it was necessary, they would draft a policy covering the use and application of the Council's CCTV facilities.

Cllr IRVING reminded the Council that the Christmas Market was cancelled this year due to Covid and, with the support of the Council, the Steering Group agreed that this year they would seek to involve other organisations in the town, which are not involved in large groups, to come together (Timebank, Covid Supports etc) and hopefully by the November meeting the Council and the Business Group would have something concrete.

20/163 PLANNING PORTFOLIO MATTERS

The TOWN CLERK to advise HDC of planning application recommendations.

Town Clerk

Cllr G WILSON moved onto Planning Correspondence advising that the National Planning White Paper comments would be submitted by HDC and Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC). All of the comments seemed comprehensive and forthright and they had made sensible recommendations. Cllr G WILSON advised that the HDC version attached had subsequently had one or two minor changes made to it. Despite all of Cllr ROUND's hardwork, Cllr G WILSON felt that as the Government would not be swayed by any input from a Town Council, he proposed that there was nothing more to do. All were in favour, and so it was **resolved**.

Cllr G WILSON advised that on 1 October 2020, Cllr CAMPBELL and he had met on site with a representative from David Wilson Homes (DWH) and a HDC case officer regarding Roman's Edge landscaping. He confirmed it was a good meeting and a file note of points had been raised, which required DWH clarification. Once the updates from DWH had been received, HDC would send the updated copy to Cllr G WILSON. Cllr G WILSON confirmed that the replacement of all the dead trees would be completed in the next month or two. He also confirmed that the swales would be top seeded to make them more attractive. Cllr G WILSON commented that the group would make every effort to ensure the area would be more attractive and useful.

Cllr G WILSON commented that following the Council's suggestion that the design was poor at 43a West Street, the applicant had asked for more information. With the help of other councillors, Cllr G WILSON would write a response and include HDC in any correspondence.

Cllr G Wilson

Cllr G WILSON referred to the CCC traffic matters and the trial closure of the bridge into Huntingdon in an effort to improve social distancing for people and cyclists. The suggestion would be to close the bridge to the majority of the users with the exception of emergency vehicles. Whippets had replied vaguely as to how the closure would impact on them and their bus routes. Cllr G WILSON advised that he would need to look more closely at their response. He would also need to go back to CCC to enquire what the impact of the A1307 opening would be. The bus service could then work out how the change would impact on their timetable. Cllr G WILSON confirmed that more work was required. Cllr YOUNG thought that Whippet's letter was largely positive; although they would not be able to cover the whole of Godmanchester, another route would reach most residents. Cllr CAMPBELL confirmed that while there could be some conflict between the cyclists and buses due to the width of the bridge, emergency vehicles would be clearly noticed and thus could use the bridge. Cllr CAMPBELL would be very disappointed if the trial closure was not supported as it would be a good opportunity to transform public and private transport routes, however, if it was not successful then it would be reviewed. Cllr CONBOY advised that a number of businesses had expressed their concern about the lack of passing trade. For example, Bellmans gain a lot of business through morning trade and vehicles passing through the town. Cllr CAMPBELL had seen a letter in the Hunts Post suggesting the possibility that The Avenue could start to be filled up with cars parking there for the railway station and an application for double yellow would take time to implement. Cllr G WILSON was keen to trial a closure of the bridge as long as there would be safe access by emergency vehicles and it did not cause damage to the town's bus services.

Cllr G Wilson

Cllr G WILSON advised that, in early November, Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) would be carrying out two days of action to include noise pollution and anti-social behaviour, and their findings would be reported back to the Council. In response to a question by Cllr YOUNG, Cllr G WILSON confirmed that the first element of the A1307 would be open to Mill Common by then. Cllr CAMPBELL advised that the road was due to open in mid August, then October but have not given a fixed date. {Note: CCC have now advised that the Pathfinder Link will open on 31 Oct}.

Cllr G WILSON advised that it had previously agreed that Town Council staff would put up the MVAS on the A1198. The TOWN CLERK reminded the Council that the task required two members of staff to put the sign up, both of whom were over 70 and in the vulnerable age group. Neither would they be able to adhere to the social distancing rules as they would be required to work closer than two metres. Cllr S WILSON advised that her immediate reaction was that the task should not take place as it was not essential and equally would not wish to instruct contractors to carry out the job. Cllr CONBOY agreed that there was a duty of care to staff and felt that it should

and can wait. Cllr ROUND commented that it was not urgent and should not be encouraging one individual's whim to have the MVAS displayed on the A1198. Cllr RADFORD felt that the Council should err on the side of caution. Cllr G WILSON confirmed it was not urgent and was not why the Council had suggested putting up the MVAS because of one individual. The MAYOR confirmed that the MVAS had been due to be put up on the A1198 before the Covid pandemic. Cllr HYAMS agreed that, although there was speeding in the town, it was not urgent to display the MVAS sign at the current time. The MAYOR proposed that the MVAS should not be put up either by staff or by anyone else on behalf of the Council. All in favour, and so it was **resolved**.

The meeting closed at 20.55