

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD
ON-LINE ON THURSDAY 10TH DECEMBER 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; C VANE PERCY; Mrs S WILSON; G
WILSON; Mrs S WORTHINGTON (Deputy Mayor); J YOUNG

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

One member of the public

MINUTES

Action

20/184 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE:

No apologies were received.

Cllr G WILSON advised that due to another meeting he was required to attend, he would be leaving the meeting at 7.30pm. However, Cllr ROUND would be presenting the planning paper.

20/185 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

Cllr VANE PERCY – trial closure of bridge

20/186 MINUTES:

The MAYOR proposed the Council approved, as a correct record, the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 19 November. All were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

20/187 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The MAYOR reminded councillors that the Council were a non-party political organisation and therefore any action taken by councillors should not be seen to be led by a specific party. Cllr G WILSON advised that the Council had three District and two County councillors whom had been elected as representing a specific party. Unfortunately, sometimes this could cause confusion as to whether actions were being raised on behalf of the town, residents or just doing the right thing for the general public. Cllr G WILSON reported that a Liberal Democrats' focus leaflet had recently been circulated but it clearly stated that it would be Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) and Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) consulting before the trial closure of the bridge and not the Town Council.

The MAYOR passed on his congratulations to former Mayor and Councillor, Mr David Underwood who had been awarded the honorary title of Canon Emeritus in the St Edmundsbury diocese following his move to Suffolk.

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

20/188 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION:

The MAYOR welcomed Cllr John Morris to the meeting. Cllr Morris advised he would be an observer only stating he had a particular interest in the trial bridge closure item.

20/189 OUTSTANDING ACTIONS:

The MAYOR confirmed that the process of registering the Council's parcels of land was continuing. The TOWN CLERK reported that possibly only the Recreation Ground still needed registering. Cllr MORGAN asked whether the non-conformist burial ground, that the Council owns, had been registered. It was agreed that the TOWN CLERK and Cllr YOUNG would discuss possible registration of church related land.

Town Clerk
and Cllr
YOUNG

The MAYOR confirmed that he was unable to provide any further update with regards to the

Mill Steps. Similarly, there were no changes to the grant project relating to the Nursery. Cllr HOOKER confirmed that he had yet to see any tenders for the Environment Grounds Maintenance contract which was due for renewal.

20/190 CORRESPONDENCE:

The MAYOR reported little correspondence again this month and confirmed that any items which had been received would be covered in the various reports.

20/191 FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTS:

The list of payments were approved.

Cllrs
Worthington
and Conboy

20/192 BUSINESS REPORT:

Cllr THOMAS advised that under the current Tier 2 regulations, six volunteers have returned to the Nursery on a rota basis.

Cllr THOMAS hoped to be able to offer limited use of the Council hall(s) at the end of January/beginning of February. Cllr THOMAS required Council approval now (due to the time constraints of Christmas) to the reopening of appropriate facilities and to delegate authority to the working group, under the guidance of the Covid Safety Team, namely Cllr S WILSON and CLLR HLADKIWSKYJ. The MAYOR proposed that the Council approve the decision. All were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr THOMAS advised that assuming the halls were to reopen that approval be sought for the cessation of hire charges until they were reviewed again at the end of the financial year. Questions were raised as to the thinking behind the proposal. Cllr S WILSON advised that due to the capacity of the halls, hirers would only be able to accommodate half of their usual members which would not cover the hirer's usual costs. The Council were considering asking the hirers to carry out some of the cleaning after sessions and to document the same. They would not be able to use the kitchen and would only use the disabled toilet. Only the trusted, regular hirers would be invited to use the halls who meet the Covid criteria. Unfortunately, casual bookings would not be allowed. The TOWN CLERK advised that, in effect, the Council would financially be supporting individual businesses and also there would be an increase of utility costs. Town Wardens would not be expected to clean the facilities and were currently doing a three hour compact (contract?) day. The MAYOR proposed that the Council approve the cessation of charges for the use of the halls until 1 April 2021. All were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr Thomas advised that the Service by Emergency Response Vehicle (SERV), more commonly known as Bloodrunners, had applied for a grant for a contribution towards its monthly vehicle running costs of £1,500. The Business Group felt that as the service assisted the NHS, especially during the current climate, and had supported Godmanchester residents over the past year, that a recommendation to approve a grant of £250 should be made. The MAYOR proposed approval of the grant. All were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

20/193 POLICY REPORT:

Cllr S WILSON congratulated all those involved in reducing the number of Council policies to the current amount which were now fit for purpose. Cllr S WILSON requested that only the policies on the website should be used, to prevent out-of-date copies being circulated. The Town Office would notify the appropriate Portfolio group when one of their policies was due for review. The MAYOR proposed that the Council approve the allocation of the policies and procedures, and maintain ongoing responsibility for future review of such documents when asked to do so. All were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

20/194 USE OF RECREATION GROUND:

Unfortunately, too late to be circulated with the Agenda last week, Cllr THOMAS reported that a letter had been received from a woman seeking authorisation to take photos on the recreation land on a single, unspecified date in December. The session would be pitched at families/bubbles, would have a festive bench as a backdrop and last only 20 minutes. The

woman was proposing to charge £10 per photo and had confirmed she had public liability insurance. In light of the pandemic, Cllr S WILSON highlighted her concern over handling of cash and ensuring that any equipment used or touch points would be appropriately cleaned after each client. A number of concerns were raised including a request for an assurance that any Council or memorial plaques/nameplates on the bench(s) used would not be depicted in the photos. Would permitting this activity set a precedent for any future enquiries and should a permit or licence be considered? Cllr WORTHINGTON advised that she had been working on a licence for people to use Council land. However, during the current Covid situation, when so many people were struggling financially, there would not be a charge for usage. Cllr S WILSON agreed to liaise with the woman directly. The MAYOR reiterated that this was a last minute appeal and that the woman had in fact had the decency to request permission and not just done it without asking. A vote was taken and the majority were in favour and it was so **resolved**. Cllr S Wilson

20/195 BUDGET ADVISORY PANEL MATTERS

Cllr THOMAS explained that the advisory panel consisted of the chairs of the Portfolio groups, Personnel Committee, the Mayor and the TOWN CLERK (in her capacity as the Responsible Financial Officer). The panel had prepared the budget for 2021/22 which would commence on 1 April 2021. They had ensured that the budget was well designed and separated out items as either revenue or capital expenditure as this had not been made clear in the past. Due to constraints by Covid and the cancellation of the Gala weekend, there had been an underspend this year but rather than transferring the £4,000 to the General Reserve, and then having to raise a further £6,000 in next year's revenue, the panel had decided to retain the underspend and offset it against expenditure on the same budget line next year. Therefore only £2,000 would need to be raised from Precept.

Cllr THOMAS advised that there were 15 capital projects detailed in the budget and these were either covered by CIL or grant funding. The Council would spend approximately £428,000 on capital expenditure leaving £320,000 in CIL/grant funding. CIL holdings were likely to increase to £330,000 by 2025. The Council's Precept income next year would increase by 2%. The MAYOR thanked the panel for all their hard work they had undertaken, and believed that residents would feel they had received equitable treatment. The MAYOR proposed that the 2021/22 budget be approved. All were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

20/196 PLANNING REPORT:

The TOWN CLERK was to advise HDC of planning application recommendations.

Town Clerk

Cllr ROUND advised there had been no planning applications submitted, only correspondence received. He informed the Council that the initial decision to object to the application on 43a West Street be withdrawn as previous concerns had been addressed by the Case Officer and Conservation Officer.

The MAYOR advised that the presentation by the promoters, regarding the care home next to A1198, had been helpful enabling advance notification of their plans. Considerations about the aesthetics and parking would become clearer when the application came in.

Cllr ROUND reported that the trial bridge closure proposal in place addressed some of the concerns regarding access for emergency vehicles. A barrier with a key pad may be used for such vehicles and the bus operators would reroute temporarily. Consultations with local businesses and residents would be necessary. Cllr ROUND advised that two options for consultation would be a leaflet drop, if not the whole town, or posting a note on the rectory wall inviting comment to come back if the resident/business would be affected.

Cllrs CAMPBELL, G WILSON and the MAYOR had attended a Zoom meeting with a CCC's Communications Officer when they discussed at length the two levels of consultation pre and post-trial. The Town Council's concerns were raised and suggestions and recommendations made. Cllr CAMPBELL felt satisfied that consultation, including joint press releases between CCC and the Town Council, information in Hunts Post, on the CCC website and communication

with stakeholders and businesses would be adequate. Cllr CAMPBELL had been advised that there would not be a barrier. Mixed concerns were raised that if a barrier were installed the community would feel that it was a 'done deal', having spent a lot of money on a barrier and not be only a trial. Clarification would be required as to whether barriers would or would not be installed and, if the trial was a success, whether the road would be permanently closed to all except emergency vehicles after six months. Cllr HLADKIWSKYJ questioned whether, if smaller buses were used, they could serve and turn in Post Street. Cllr IRVING asked whether the Council knew if motorists and cyclists would be advised or instructed on which part of the highway to travel during the trial period. Cllr CONBOY raised concerns regarding children who were reliant on the bus service for school. Cllr G Wilson

Karen Sismore had requested that the 30mph speed limit sign on Silver Street be moved. The TOWN CLERK would contact the resident and advise that the matter was for CCC and although the Council supported her, they had been unable to get them to move the sign in the past. Town Clerk

A resident had complained that people had been parking on the verge at Ravenshoe causing a muddy mess. Cllr G WILSON had raised the matter with CCC in the hope that wooden bollards would be erected. Cllr CONBOY advised that the land belonged to HDC and, some 12 months ago, they had declined to reinstate the fence on the land which had run into disrepair.

R Jupe had made a request for a safety signage or mirror on Barringer Court. The TOWN CLERK would respond stating that the Council would consider this, as part of the forthcoming Transport Study, although they have concerns about signs proliferating around the town where the Council had similar issues. Town Clerk

20/197 LUTON AIRPORT CONSULTATION REPORT:

The MAYOR presented a paper on the proposed changes to the flightpaths of aircraft arriving at London Luton Airport (LLA). The MAYOR briefed the Council on his findings following attendance of an open seminar. His feeling was that the impact would be minimal on the town: aircraft would predominately come directly into land rather than stack but, if they were required to do so, it would be at a height of 8,000 feet or over which would not be heard within a standard house. Cllr WORTHINGTON asked what the views were of Huntingdon and other surrounding Councils before a decision was made. The Mayor

20/198 PROPERTY REPORT:

Cllr CAMPBELL provided an update on the Multi Wheel Fun Track project. Documents had been issued to eight tenderers with an extended tender period of six weeks (ending on 4 January 2021) to give them sufficient time to come up with the designs. Following a meeting of the Advisory Committee, consisting of 12 members, Cllr CAMPBELL would provide suggestions at the February Council meeting.

Cllr CAMPBELL advised that a further submission for the public toilet at Judith's Field had been made to the planners at HDC. If HDC confirm that the construction was a permitted development then work would soon commence with possibly the toilets being in use by the Spring.

Cllr CAMPBELL reported that the defects at the Judith's Field Pavilion following the upgrade should have been addressed yesterday (9 December). A final inspection would be required and then the 2.5% retention would be released.

Cllr CAMPBELL confirmed that the final certificate for the skate park had been issued and the 2.5% retention has been released to the contractor.

A working party had been formed made up of Cllrs WORTHINGTON, RADFORD and CAMPBELL to take the maps and leaflets project forward. Cllr CAMPBELL invited those interested to contact him directly. Cllr MAHMOOD volunteered to help. All to note

Cllr CAMPBELL thanked Cllr IRVING and Town Warden (Stephen Wakeman), Cllr HOOKER and

the Community Association for all their efforts towards the Festival of Lights. Cllr CAMPBELL asked whether Cllr IRVING would be able to cone-off the left hand side of the car park at School Hill to allow for the full benefit of the lights. Concern was raised that the cones would need to be put out and then retrieved again on a daily basis. However, it was noted that any parked cars would normally disperse around 5pm so we would keep this as a potential option, if required.

Cllr WORTHINGTON asked for an update on the situation with the boiler at Judith's Field. The engineer who originally installed the boiler had signed it off as being compliant. However, following an annual service by an engineer from T Clarke, it was condemned as the location of the vent was deemed to be too close to the boiler. The TOWN CLERK suggested obtaining a further (third) opinion from an independent engineer to provide the Council with an impartial report. Cllr WORTHINGTON was in agreement with this option as the Council had a duty to the hirers to ensure their safety whilst using the hall. The MAYOR suggested that contact be made with a National Body for Heating Engineers to see who they would recommend and thereafter a third opinion be sought to act as an arbitrator. All were in favour and it was so **resolved**. Town Clerk

20/199 ENVIROMENT REPORT:

Cllr HOOKER confirmed that the disabled element (a double chest press) for the adult gym had originally been agreed by Fresh Air Fitness at a cost of £3,130.00 plus VAT. However, having provided the suppliers with a scaled drawing, they had now reduced the cost to £2,869.50 which included the rubber crumb surfacing and the installation. It had been confirmed that it would be possible to install the equipment in early January 2021, to avoid clashing with the Mill Steps project. The MAYOR proposed that the Council gave permission for the work to be carried out. The majority were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr HOOKER provided an update on the tender process for Skyworld which would use CIL expenditure. The group had suggested that they would make a proposal at the Council's January meeting. This was based on the fact that the tender had originally gone out to only two companies. Subsequently, the formal tender document, providing full details of what the Council required, was uploaded to the Contract Finder with a deadline of 7 December. However, as only three companies had made submissions, Cllr HOOKER asked that an Extraordinary meeting be scheduled to allow him to present his paper sooner, with the view to agreeing the expenditure to ensure the equipment would be in place prior to Gala Weekend. The MAYOR agreed that an Extraordinary meeting would be called in approximately a week's time and asked that Cllr HOOKER and the TOWN CLERK to make the arrangements. Cllrs G and S WILSON and Cllr CONBOY gave their apologies if the meeting were to be on that date. Town Clerk/Cllr Hooker

Cllr HOOKER was pleased to announce that the Environment Agency's permit to construct the Willow Walk had now been received. The work was expected to be undertaken at the end of Summer 2021; August/September when the ground was dry and hard.

Cllr HOOKER confirmed that the volunteer group had stacked a lot of the logs created by the recent tidy of fallen willows by GTS by the osier beds. Originally the idea was to replace the willows, however, they would have needed to be purchased in a vast quantity to make it cost effective. On the advice of the Council Tree Warden (Cllr CAMPBELL), ten black poplars had been purchased at a cost of £400, rather than £200, as the trees were more mature. Judith's Field would also benefit from one. Bulrushes and water lilies, up to a maximum cost of £500, would also be purchased and planted around the osier beds.

Cllr HOOKER advised that the plaque on the town sign had vanished, therefore the other existing plaque had been removed and would be copied at a cost of between £100-200.

Cllr CAMPBELL confirmed that a litter pick had recently taken place at Judith's Field which had produced two full bin bags. He suggested a further pick could be carried out elsewhere in the town in a joint effort with Godmanchester in Bloom.

Cllr HOOKER confirmed that a warning sign had been commissioned by the Pollarding Society

which would be installed at the swimming steps, hopefully, over the forthcoming weekend (weather permitting). The Environment group would be reviewing the town's signs in due course.

The MAYOR thanked Cllr HOOKER for all his hard work and congratulated him on obtaining the permit from the Environment Agency and the reduction in Fresh Air Fitness's fees.

20/200 PERSONNEL REPORT:

Cllr WORTHINGTON reported that the Committee had not met since the last Council meeting, however, they were due to meet next Monday. The process of recruiting an administrative role to be based at the Nursery, and provide support to the Nursery Manager, would now take place in January and not in March as originally scheduled. The role had been budgeted for.

Cllr WORTHINGTON reminded councillors if they needed assistance to always go through the TOWN CLERK, even if a matter was urgent, rather than contacting the Town Wardens or office staff directly. The TOWN CLERK would know who was working, off sick, attending a medical appointment etc. Staff should not be contacted out of office hours unless it was an emergency.

Cllr WORTHINGTON confirmed she would provide an update at next week's Extraordinary Meeting following the Personnel Committee meeting on Monday.

Cllr WORTHINGTON requested that it be noted that the Freemen of Godmanchester had contributed £500 to this year's Christmas tree. **(Post meeting note – already noted in the minutes of 26 November 2020, which still required approval).**

Cllr HLADKIWSKYJ encouraged councillors to have a walk around the town and enjoy the Festival of Light. He reported that it had already been appreciated by the residents. The MAYOR thanked all those involved in arranging the display and the additional lights on the champagne terrace which were now on timers, and thanks to the Town Warden, Stephen Wakeman, for sorting out the floodlighting on the Town Hall.

CLOSING STATEMENT

The Mayor wished all councillors and Town Hall staff a Merry Christmas, and extended his hopes for a happy and healthy – and Covid-free – New Year.

The meeting closed at 20.52