

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING HELD IN THE
COMRADES CLUB AT 19.00 ON THURSDAY 24TH JUNE 2021**

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

Town Clerk: Ms V PRYCE
Minute Taker: Mrs C WHITLOCK
Mace Bearer: Mr M WILLIAMS

6 members of the public were in attendance

MINUTES

Action

21/82 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE:

Cllr C Vane Percy – Apologies received

21/83 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None

21/84 MINUTES:

The MAYOR proposed the Council approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 15th April 2021 and 5th May 2021. Cllr TAPLIN proposed the minutes were approved and Cllr RADFORD seconded the proposal, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

21/85 INCOMING TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The MAYOR welcomed those in attendance to the first face to face meeting in some months. The MAYOR reported that since taking office in May, he had laid a wreath to mark the 100th anniversary of The Royal British Legion and had also had the pleasure of officially opening the new Dental Surgery. The MAYOR had met virtually with Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) at the quarterly liaison meeting. He noted that, in the future, he would seek the Council's input prior to the meeting so that any issues could be raised and addressed.

The MAYOR advised that it was a privilege and an honour to be elected as the Town's Mayor. However, he advised that the position was not as an individual but as a collective; namely the Council and acknowledged the wealth of experience from previous Mayors.

A formal vote of thanks was recorded to the Town's outgoing Deputy Mayor, Cllr Sue WORTHINGTON, and Mayor, Cllr Dick TAPLIN. The MAYOR reported that Cllr WORTHINGTON was one of the longest serving Councillors, who was ever present and supportive in her role. The MAYOR thanked Cllr TAPLIN, assisted by his wife, Nan, who had worked tirelessly over the last two years. Constrained by the pandemic, Cllr TAPLIN had not been able to achieve quite what he had hoped, however, the MAYOR congratulated Cllr TAPLIN on his achievements with the Civic Supper, Garage Sales and always putting his mayoral duties to the fore

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Date:

and ahead of personnel commitments. The MAYOR looked forward to Cllr TAPLIN's support. A formal vote of thanks was proposed and which was unanimously approved.

The MAYOR welcomed his Deputy Mayor, Colin Hyams with his extensive experience in committee work and looked forward to working with him more closely.

In line with the Council's Communications Policy, the MAYOR advised that, following each monthly Town Council meeting, he would publish a brief synopsis of the relevant issues and decisions taken on the Council Website and local social media.

The Mayor

The MAYOR felt that the team should be proud of what they had achieved during the challenges of the last 15 months. The MAYOR then handed over to the outgoing Mayor.

21/86 OUTGOING TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Cllr TAPLIN thanked the MAYOR for his kind and 'undeserved' words and confirmed he would support him. Cllr TAPLIN confirmed that there had been challenges during the 24 months in post. During the first nine months (Covid-19 free), Cllr TAPLIN confirmed he had attended 130 external invitations out of a possible 147. Cllr TAPLIN thanked all those people who had assisted the Town during the pandemic including Street Co-ordinators, Timebank, Foodbank, Covid-19 Mutual Aid Group. Referring to the flooding shortly before Christmas 2020, Cllr TAPLIN wished to thank all those who stepped up to the plate and offered their services. In addition, also those who received thanks were the Mace Bearer, Rev Busk, the TOWN CLERK, staff and those Councillors who continued to serve from the back benches. As a result of notable fundraising efforts during his term of office, Cllr TAPLIN was able to present cheques to all his nominated charities; RAFA, Royal British Legion, Scouts and Girlguiding.

21/87 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION:

The MAYOR welcomed Malcolm Cohen on behalf of Godmanchester in Bloom (GMCiB). Mr Cohen thanked the Council for their continued payments to K Ferguson Ltd to water the GMCiB planters, hanging baskets etc. Mr Cohen explained that, due to the pandemic, the group had not been able to hold their usual fundraising open gardens event which had been cancelled for the second year in a row. Mr Cohen explained how GMCiB had previously supported the Town Show, had worked on the Critical Care Centre Garden at Hinchbrooke and also helped McCartney with their front gardens to the benefit of the residents. A grant request had therefore been made to the Council to consider some financial support.

Martin Williams, in his capacity as Mace Bearer, was present and wished to thank the MAYOR and Councillors for inviting him and commented that it was good to be back.

The Club 800 Draw took place with the assistance of Cllrs G and S WILSON.

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21/88 CONFIRMATION OF MEMBERSHIP OF PORTFOLIO GROUPS, PERSONNEL COMMITTEE AND REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS:

The new representatives for the Portfolio Groups had been decided and circulated prior to the meeting. However, at Cllr S WILSON's request, she would move to the Environment Portfolio Group. Once a new Councillor was recruited they would fill the vacancy on the Property Portfolio Group.

The MAYOR confirmed that Cllr TAPLIN would be the Council's representative for the Huntingdon and Godmanchester Twinning Association (HGTA) but that he required an additional representative to join him.

All to Note

The MAYOR confirmed that he would continue to be a member of the Mill Steps Liaison Group.

Changes to the Personnel Committee would now consist of Cllrs CONBOY, HOOKER, HYAMS, and WORTHINGTON. The Chair of the group would be decided at next Monday's meeting (28th June). The MAYOR confirmed he would continue to attend in the capacity of ex officio. The MAYOR proposed the Council vote in favour of the members of the groups as detailed above. Cllr Taplin seconded the proposal, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

21/89 OUTSTANDING ACTIONS:

The MAYOR confirmed that these items would be covered in the Portfolio reports.

21/90 CORRESPONDENCE:

The MAYOR confirmed that these items would be covered in the Portfolio reports.

21/91 ANNUAL RETURN & ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT:

The TOWN CLERK read through the Annual Return and Annual Governance Statement. The Council collectively confirmed that they were all in agreement.

21/92 FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTS:

21/92.1 It was noted that the list of payments were made in May and June.

21/92.2 It was noted that receipt of salary information, petty cash reconciliation to 31st May, monthly budget report on the year to date, monthly bank reconciliation were made.

21/93 BUSINESS AND FINANCE REPORT:

Cllr WORTHINGTON reported that the Group had discussed the reopening of the halls with effect from 21st June. However, following the changes to the Government's Covid-19 roadmap, the halls remained closed but would be reviewed again when further easing of restrictions was announced.

Cllr WORTHINGTON reported that some residents (McCartney House and The Chestnuts) did not receive their copy of the newsletter. The distribution company had offered a 20% discount to be used within the next three. The Group felt that this period was not acceptable as the next newsletter for distribution would not be produced again within that timescale. Cllr

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WORTHINGTON proposed that the Council used the company again but their offer of a 20% discount should be accepted on the condition that the period was extended. Cllr CONBOY seconded the proposal, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**. The TOWN CLERK would contact the distribution company to confirm.

Town Clerk

Cllr WORTHINGTON wished to note that the MAYOR would be attending a meeting in July regarding the swimming steps to try and find a way forward with its regeneration.

Also to note was that the Internal Audit report raised a minor fault on the website when hovering over photos. The TOWN CLERK confirmed that this was in hand and would be resolved by inviting an outside IT specialists to assist in updating the website.

Town Clerk

Cllr WORTHINGTON proposed that the hire charges for the Council halls remain the same as per 2020 levels, which would have normally been reviewed in April. This would be for the remainder of the financial year. Cllr RADFORD seconded the proposal, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

The Business Group had received a request from Adam Castleton, Community Projects Manager at Cross Keys Homes (the company responsible for social housing at Romans' Edge) to run a variety of activities at the Nursery. The activities would support all residents (not just Romans' Edge) with their mental health and wellbeing. Cross Keys Homes would donate £25 per use of the Nursery. Cllr WORTHINGTON proposed that the Council granted permission for Cross Keys Homes to use the Nursery during opening hours. The DEPUTY MAYOR seconded the proposal, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**. Cllr WORTHINGTON proposed that the Council accepted the donation of £25 per use. The DEPUTY MAYOR seconded the proposal, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr WORTHINGTON advised that three Grant Applications had been received. One was from GMCiB with a request for £1,000 to enable them to purchase plants as they had not been able to fundraise in the usual manner due to the pandemic. The Business Group had noted that GMCiB had requested £500 last year, however, the Council had actually awarded them £1,000 to cover two years. Cllr WORTHINGTON agreed that GMCiB did a lot for the community (and even pledged £1,000 towards the Mill Steps project). Therefore, the Business Group wished to support GMCiB and Cllr WORTHINGTON proposed that the Council should offer GMCiB bulbs from the Nursery to the value of £500 but would request a plan of where they would be planted. Cllr TAPLIN seconded the proposal, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Town Clerk

Godmanchester Town Show had submitted a Grant Application for £800. This was for half the cost of purchasing a marquee to be used at this year's show at Godmanchester Community Nursery. Although detailed in the application, the Council had not agreed or been approached about holding the event at the Nursery in the future. Cllr TAPLIN advised that the Town Show had traditionally been held in St Mary's Church and once the refurbishments were completed, it was likely that the event would return to that venue in the future. The Business Group felt that it was somewhat premature to purchase a marquee at this stage

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so Cllr WORTHINGTON proposed that the Council refused the application but suggested that help was given to source a marquee for this year. Cllr TAPLIN seconded the proposal, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Town Clerk

The final Grant application was from Huntingdonshire Volunteer Centre (HVC). The submission was for funds to support their Community Car Scheme which served in Godmanchester, although the Council had not been aware of the scheme operating within the Town during the pandemic. The Council discussed whether the application should be refused due to the large amount which had been requested and the fact the grant was for running costs (which was not part of the policy). Unfortunately no details of their accounts had been provided either, although Cllr TAPLIN was aware that they did exist. As HVC had not met the Council's requirements, Cllr WORTHINGTON proposed that the Council sought more information from HVC before a decision could be made. This would also involve clarifying with them the Council's own procedures. It was agreed that the Council would process the grant if and when HVC were successful, and not wait until the next round of submissions in December.

Town Clerk

In April the Council gave the TOWN CLERK delegated powers to authorise essential Planning and Financial matters between 7th May and the first physical meeting of the Council thereafter. These delegated powers were therefore due to expire on Thursday 24th June. The Council discussed whether the delegated powers should continue which would omit the need for Extraordinary meetings, which could prove more problematic now meetings were required to be face to face again. Cllr G WILSON commented that the powers should be time limited again as it was unfair for applicants and objectors if the application process was not consistent for everyone. Cllr WORTHINGTON proposed that delegated powers would continue for a period of six months. Cllr G WILSON raised a counter proposal for the delegated powers be extended for a period of only two months. Cllr YOUNG seconded the proposal and the majority were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Town Clerk

Cllr YOUNG advised members that he and Cllr RADFORD would be representing the Council on the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Committee which had been set up by Stephen Spencer. Cllr YOUNG requested that any ideas or suggestions should be passed onto either him or Cllr RADFORD in time for a Zoom meeting on 2nd August.

All to note

21/94 POLICIES UPDATE:

Cllr S WILSON advised that there were three policies which required review; Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Council confirmed they had read the documents and no changes were required. Cllr S WILSON proposed that Council voted to accept the three policies in their current format. Cllr MORGAN seconded the proposal, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

21/95 GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE:

Cllr WORTHINGTON confirmed that Council wished to continue to hold the General Power of Competence and that this request should be formally noted in the minutes.

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21/96 ENVIRONMENT REPORT:

Cllr HOOKER advised that he had invited quotes to carry out the triannual tree report. However, GTS were the only company who submitted a quote for £1,667 plus VAT. Cllr HOOKER commented that the quote was not dissimilar to the amount the Council had paid for the last report three years ago, but now included 80 more trees included at Buttermel and the Nursery. Cllr HOOKER proposed that the quote from GTS for £1,667 plus VAT should be accepted. Cllr TAPLIN seconded the proposal, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr HOOKER explained that the Council wished to upgrade the Toddler Play Area at Judith's Field with new equipment. However, the existing climbing frame was looking tired and required rubbing down, removing the rust and a repaint using the three same colours as before. Cllr Hooker proposed that the Council accept the quote provided by Andy's Property Maintenance to repaint the toddler climbing frame at a cost of £1,540 (no VAT and charged to budget account number 4755). Cllr RADFORD seconded the proposal, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr HOOKER confirmed that four companies had been asked to quote for resurfacing Willow Walk. Only two companies had responded. Cllr HOOKER proposed awarding Grays Surfacing the work at a cost of £16,500 plus VAT subject to suitable references and a method statement (for the Environment Agency to be able to grant a permit) being received. Cllr G WILSON seconded the proposal, all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr A Hooker

21/97 PLANNING REPORT:

The TOWN CLERK had already advised HDC of planning application recommendations.

Town Clerk

Cllr IRVING commented that as the Mill Steps Project was under way, Mill Yard car park was now not in use. It was suggested that HDC should provide some alternative car parking, for example on the Freeman field near the War Memorial or possibly at the long stay car park but for the fees to be waived.

John Illingworth at HDC have invited the Town Council to discuss the progress for Godmanchester and the Offords. Unfortunately, neither of the Town's District Councillors would be available to meet. The TOWN CLERK would formally contact Mr Illingworth for clarification and support to the flood plan and to arrange for a representative to attend. The Town Council do not wish to have the responsibility for the distribution or removal of the sand bags, however, it was agreed that it would be useful if details of where to get them from were posted on the Council's website and on Facebook.

21/98 PROPERTY REPORT:

Cllr RADFORD advised the ANPR camera at Judith's Field had not been working so when the Police requested the footage, following a firework incident, nothing could be provided to them. Cllr RADFORD wished to purchase a new camera at a cost of £775. A discussion took place regarding the option of using HDC's CCTV facilities. The TOWN CLERK questioned whether removal of relatively new CCTV equipment from Judith's Field was advisable, only to then pay HDC to facilitate the job. If the camera had been working the Police would have obtained valuable

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images. The TOWN CLERK advised she had already been awaiting at least two months for a response from HDC. The TOWN CLERK confirmed that the equipment was serviced frequently, however, as the work took place in the day, the night vision option was not checked. Cllr RADFORD proposed that the Council purchased a replacement, higher resolution ANPR camera at a cost of £775, Cllr TAPLIN seconded the proposal, and the majority were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr RADFORD advised that Cllr MORGAN had undertaken to review the Flag Flying Policy and suggested amendments were agreed. Cllr RADFORD proposed that the amendments which had already been agreed at the Property Portfolio meeting were agreed by Council as listed in the report. Cllr MORGAN seconded the proposal and all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

Cllr RADFORD explained that the Town flag was showing severe signs of wear undoubtedly due to wind damage. The flag was very heavy because of the complex design and how it had been assembled and proposed to purchase a new flag made from a more robust fabric. Cllr TAPLIN thanked Cllr MORGAN for his husbandry of the flag and to his own wife repairing the flag on many occasions. Cllr S WILSON seconded the proposal and all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC: To resolve 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.

21/99 MWFT REPORT:

Cllr G WILSON commented that following a very thorough analysis of the project, both he and Cllr ROUND were now happy to support it. Cllr RADFORD proposed that Council approved the recommendation of the working party to award Clark and Kent the contract for the Multi Wheel Fun Track at cost of £78,950 (excluding VAT). Cllr HLADKIWSKYJ seconded the proposal and all were in favour and it was so **resolved**.

21/100 PERSONNEL REPORT:

Cllr WORTHINGTON reported that the Committee were due to meet on Monday 28th June and that items discussed at the last meeting were now out of date due to the ever changing Covid-19 situation. Cllr WORTHINGTON confirmed that staff would not be returning to the office when the Senior Citizens were using the Town Hall. The public and Councillors would be allowed access to the Town Hall by appointment only.

Cllr WORTHINGTON advised that the position of Deputy Clerk had been advertised for 30 hours per week but no responses had been received. The TOWN CLERK had advertised the post via SLCC. Unfortunately, there had not been any responses to the Town Warden position either.

Cllr WORTHINGTON confirmed that the Committee would be completing the TOWN CLERK'S appraisal on Monday and wish Councillors to provide her with

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any points or comments prior to that date.

The TOWN CLERK would be attending training through CIPFA

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

The MAYOR thanked the Comrades Club for the use of their hall and the Councillors, Town Clerk and office staff for attending the meeting.

The meeting closed at 21.01.

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