

WHITTLESEY TOWN COUNCIL

14 October 2020 at 7.30pm (held using the Zoom video conferencing system)

Minutes of meeting

Present: Councillor Mason, Chairman; Councillors Boden, Davies, Dorling, Gerstner, Mrs Laws, Mrs Mayor, Miscandlon, Munns, Whitwell, Wicks and Mrs Windle.

Officer in Attendance: Mr T Jordan, Locum Clerk for the meeting.

F156/20. To receive apologies from absent members and the reason for the apology

There were no apologies for absence (all members were present).

F157/20. Declaration of Members' Pecuniary Interests, on items to be discussed later in the agenda and the Council to decide which items are to be discussed as confidential under agenda item number F171/20

There were no declarations of interest. However, the three members listed below wished that their respective statements be recorded:

- Councillor Miscandlon: as a substitute member of the District Council's Planning Committee, he might make comment on planning applications but would reserve the right to change his mind in the event that more information becomes available
- Councillor Mrs Laws: as Portfolio Holder for Planning at the District Council, she would only speak on planning applications if asked, by the Chairman, for advice and clarification
- Councillor Mrs Mayor: as a member of the District Council's Planning Committee, she might make comment on planning applications but would reserve the right to change her mind in the event that more information becomes available.

Members decided that no items on the agenda needed to be discussed confidentially.

F158/20. FDC Street Scene Officer's Report

Members received the monthly report from the District Council's Street Scene Officer, which had been forwarded to them in advance of the meeting.

Councillor Mrs Mayor reminded members of the comments that she had made at the last meeting of the council; that being her understanding that the Whittlesey Street Pride Group had undertaken no work during the summer, because of instruction not to do so. She expressed her disappointment that no works had been undertaken to the boats.

Councillor Dorling mentioned that some work had been undertaken during recent months by the Street Pride Group but not of the types which had been mentioned by Councillor Mrs Mayor. He informed members that, as a result of litter-picking by the group between April 2020 and now, 131 bags of litter had been collected. He made the point that a number of the Street Pride Group volunteers are deemed to be vulnerable in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and, consequently, undertake activities alone, rather than as part of the group.

Members decided that the content of the report and the comments of Councillors Mrs Mayor and Dorling be noted.

F159/20. Police matters, including CCTV Report

Councillor Mason informed members that the local Constabulary had introduced recently a new means of engagement with the local councils in Fenland; this consists of a meeting held using a video conferencing system, hosted by the Constabulary, to which the Chairmen of the Town and Parish Councils are invited. He mentioned that one meeting had taken place to date and the next one is scheduled for 28 October 2020; he invited members to forward to him any issues that they would like raised at the next meeting.

Members received the monthly report CCTV Report from Fenland District Council, which had been forwarded to them in advance of the meeting.

Members decided to note

- (1) the information, reported by Councillor Mason, in relation to the local Constabulary's new method of engagement with the Town and Parish Councils in Fenland;
- (2) the content of the CCTV Report.

F160/20. Minutes of the Council meeting held on 16 September 2020

Members decided that the minutes of the meeting of Whittlesey Town Council held on 16 September 2020 be approved as a correct record, to be signed by the Chairman when possible.

F161/20. Public Forum

Any member of the public is permitted, within a total time allocation of 15 minutes, to address the council.

Two members of the public, Deborah Slator and Bernard Gray-Esson, availed themselves of the opportunity to address the council.

Mrs Slator

Mrs Slator updated the council on the proposal of the Helping Whittlesey Group in relation to this year's Remembrance. She mentioned that the group would like to "flood" the town with artificial poppies affixed to 26 panels which could be attached (using cable ties) to railings at certain locations within the town; one of the locations would be the Gardens of Rest and the group would also like to install panels at the Market Place (including the Buttercross).

Mrs Slator mentioned that she had spoken with relevant officers at Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council and a representative of the Royal British Legion regarding Helping Whittlesey Group's proposal.

In addition, Mrs Slator read to the council a draft version of a letter that she had prepared, for the purpose of seeking to secure donations from local businesses for the 2020 Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

Members decided that the comments made by Mrs Slator be noted and that Councillor Mason would meet with her to discuss the Helping Whittlesey Group's proposal.

Mr Gray-Esson

Mr Gray-Esson informed the council that, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is difficult for the Whittlesey in Bloom volunteers to litter-pick as a group; whilst undertaking litter-picking as individuals, the volunteers do not wear the Whittlesey in Bloom "regalia"/logos. He expressed his awareness that some areas within the town are looking neglected; however, work would be progressed next Tuesday on the project for Plough Road. Mr Gray-Esson mentioned that the group had been informed that no more than six persons could work together at any one time.

Members decided that the comments made by Mr Gray-Esson be noted.

F162/20. County Councillor reports

Councillor Boden reported to members on the latest situation with regard to the Kings Dyke project. He mentioned that since Jones Brothers had taken-on the project (in July 2020), good progress had been made; building-up the embankments is part of the early work.

Councillor Boden commented that the number of workers on-site would be increasing in the very near future. He informed members that some of the residents who live in the vicinity of the site had made complaints regarding suffering vibration to their properties. Councillor Boden expressed the opinion that the cause may not be the project works but simply vehicles travelling along the existing road surface; he mentioned that the Local Highway Authority would be undertaking a survey of the condition of the road surface in that locality.

Councillor Miscandlon expressed his appreciation of the work of Jones Brothers in keeping the roads "mud-free" as far as possible. Councillor Boden stated that he would pass on Councillor Miscandlon's comments to the Monitoring Group.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

F163/20. Agenda items for Discussion

(1) Growing Fenland Stakeholders Whittlesey Group

Councillor Mrs Laws updated members on the current situation regarding the Growing Fenland initiative insofar as it relates to Whittlesey.

Members were informed by Councillor Mrs Laws that the Funding Agreement from the office of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) had been received and is currently being examined by the Legal Services Team at Fenland District Council; as soon as the District Council is satisfied that the agreement is appropriate, it can be signed; the funding (for the interactive highway signs) would then be released by the CPCA.

Councillor Mrs Laws mentioned that the manufacturing period for the interactive signs would be 8 weeks; installing the signs would take a further 2 weeks.

Members were informed by Councillor Mrs Laws that the deadline for submission of the application for funding for a Heritage Centre is 30 October 2020.

Councillor Mrs Laws informed members that the third application for Whittlesey would be for a Heritage Walk; the production of a funding application is well underway. She mentioned that the Stakeholder Group, which is very active, may produce an application for a fourth project.

Councillor Mrs Laws thanked Councillor Mason for his support of the work of the Stakeholder Group.

Councillor Boden mentioned that the Mayor of the CPCA had commented that he expects half of the £1 million made available to each of the towns in Fenland to have been allocated by 30 October 2020 and to link with Covid-19 recovery work (to support the economy). However, he had met subsequently with the Mayor of the CPCA, who had agreed to put-back the deadline by approximately one month. Councillor Boden expressed the opinion that applicants for this funding would need to be "creative" with their applications to be able to show links with their projects and Covid-19 recovery.

In response to a question from Councillor Dorling as to whether the funding available from the CPCA is capital or revenue, Councillor Boden stated that it is for capital projects only.

Members decided that the current situation be noted.

(2) Property Working Group

Councillor Mason reported that he had invited three quotations for the supply and installation of railings over the lower wall at the front of Peel House. As he had received only one quotation to date, this item would be carried forward to the next meeting for consideration.

Members were informed by Councillor Mason that agreement had been reached, at last, with the council's water suppliers regarding splitting of the water supply into separate domestic and commercial supplies; this will involve a certain amount of groundworks and quotations for such work will now be sought as a matter of urgency.

Councillor Mason mentioned that he would be meeting Jamie Burton of Swann Edwards (Architects) next week to finalise the rectification process for the handing over of Peel House, after which the council would be in a position to settle the contingency sum held back from NB Construction.

Members were informed by Councillor Mason that twelve weeks' notice for vacating one of the flats is imminent, during which period Peterborough City Council would make good, at that council's expense, any damage which had been caused by the tenants during their occupancy of the flat.

With regard to tenancy of the flat, Councillor Mrs Laws enquired as to whether the Town Council had a new tenant "lined-up" to take-up occupancy once the flat is ready for occupation. She expressed the opinion that, now that the Government's Re-settlement Scheme had finished, it would be necessary for the council to find tenants each time that there is a vacancy.

Councillor Wicks expressed the opinion that the council needs to be aware of the condition of the flat at the time of being "handed back" to the council. In response to Councillor Wicks' question as to whether there is an agreement in place for any repair works to be undertaken, Councillor Mason commented that Peterborough City Council had accepted that liability

Members decided that the information reported by Councillor Mason and the consequent comments of other members be noted.

(3) MVAS Progress Report

Councillor Miscandlon informed members that approval had been given by the Local Highway Authority (LHA) for the installation of posts for the MVAS units on Stonald Road and that County Councillor Connor is "chasing-up" approvals from the LHA for the other proposed locations across the town.

Members were informed by Councillor Miscandlon that all of the units had been calibrated and are "ready to go". An electrician is ready to undertake the installation works as soon as approval has been received for all proposed locations. He added that the proposed locations in Coates and Eastrea had also been approved by the LHA.

In response to a question from Councillor Wicks, Councillor Miscandlon confirmed that a MVAS unit would be installed in Turves but an exact location needs to be agreed. He mentioned that one spare bracket is available and that he had invited Councillor Mrs Mayor to identify an additional location. Councillor Mrs Mayor stated that she had been in liaison with the Town Clerk in that regard; Councillor Miscandlon stated that he would contact the Town Clerk upon her return from sickness absence.

Councillor Mason expressed his thanks to Councillor Miscandlon and the Town Clerk for the work that they had undertaken to achieve delivery of this project.

Members decided that the current situation be noted.

(4) Remembrance Day arrangements

Councillor Mason updated members on the situation with regard to Remembrance Day this year.

Councillor Mason mentioned that there had been no Government instructions or guidance issued on procedures for Remembrance Day ceremonies this year, except for arrangements in London at the Cenotaph; these would be scaled-down significantly this year. At this stage it had been left very much to local authorities to decide on what should take place in their own local areas.

Councillor Mason reminded members that the council had discussed this matter at its last meeting and he mentioned that the Town Clerk and he had met subsequently with the Parade Marshall to discuss options. He expressed the opinion that it would be unthinkable to abandon a ceremony of respect for those who gave their lives in conflict whilst in the service of their country but, at the same time, the council must be mindful of Government guidelines issued in relation to social distancing during the current Covid-19 pandemic.

Accordingly, it had been decided that a scaled-down Remembrance ceremony would take place at Whittlesey War Memorial at 2.30 pm on 8 November 2020 with a limited number of wreaths being laid. There would be no street parade preceding the wreath laying and no church service or reception afterwards.

Members were informed by Councillor Mason that there would be Acts of Remembrance attended by representatives of Whittlesey Town Council at Coates and Pondersbridge at 11.00 am and at Turves and Eastrea at 12 noon on 8 November 2020. In the interests of the public in general, it is suggested that they stay at home and pay their respects by watching on television the national event at the Cenotaph in London.

Councillor Mason informed members that it is hoped that Fenland Youth Radio would be able to broadcast the short service at the Whittlesey War Memorial and a visual recording of proceedings undertaken by Robert Windle for posting on social media later. On 11 November, a short Act of Remembrance would be held, as usual, at Whittlesey War Memorial at 11.00 am.

Councillor Mason stressed the importance of informing the public of this year's local Remembrance arrangements and commented that he had produced articles for both The Fens and Discovering Whittlesey magazines in that regard. The council would also "spread the word" through the use of social media and the Town Council's website.

Councillor Miscandlon, who, in his capacity as Chairman of Fenland District Council, had been provided with details of the Remembrance Day activities in the other three towns in Fenland, commented that the proposals for Whittlesey are generally "in line" with those for Chatteris, March and Wisbech.

Members decided that Councillor Mason's update be noted.

(5) Ely Capacity update – Rail junctions

Councillor Wicks informed members that a consultation exercise in relation to an upgrade of the Ely North junction is currently underway. He made the point that such an upgrade would be important for Whittlesey and he encouraged members to respond to the consultation exercise (which concludes on 1 November 2020) themselves and to draw this exercise to the attention of the public.

Members decided that the information provided by Councillor Wicks be noted.

(6) Entrance to the Manor Leisure Centre

Councillor Mrs Mayor reminded members that the Whittlesey in Bloom group maintains the flower beds at the entrance to the Manor Leisure Centre. However, as the current wooden planters are rotten, Fenland District Council had agreed to remove and "tarmac over" the existing flower beds, to enable the Whittlesey in Bloom group to site new planters which are manufactured from recycled plastic.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

F164/20. To receive councillor and outside body reports

Councillor Mason mentioned a letter that he had sent to all members of the council and requested them to respond to him with their comments.

Councillor Gerstner alerted members to the imminent demise of the Whittlesey Society.

Councillor Mrs Windle requested that the council places on record its congratulations to Ellie Nicholls and Phil Knighton for receiving the awards of Young Citizen of the Year and Citizen of the Year respectively, under the Town Council's awards scheme.

Members decided that the comments of Councillors Mason, Gerstner and Mrs Windle be noted.

F165/20. Draft minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee meeting held on 21 September 2020

Members received the draft minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee meeting held on 21 September 2020.

Councillor Boden mentioned that a number of the council's policies would be the subject of review in 2021.

Councillor Boden expressed his appreciation of the work which had been undertaken by the Town Clerk in getting the council's finances up-to-date before the commencement of her sickness absence; there was concurrence by other members with the opinion expressed by Councillor Boden.

Members decided that the draft minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee meeting held on 21 September 2020 be noted.

F166/20. To receive the financial documents

Members received the council's financial documents, as follows:

- Bank Reconciliation as at 26 September 2020, which shows cash in hand at that date of £112,082.15
- the lists of payments and uncashed payments to a value £18,933.18 for vouchers 101 to 127.

Members decided that the payments listed be approved.

- the year to date (2020/21) figures.

Councillor Boden gave explanations for some of the figures, including the fact that there are some anomalies within the Staffing costs; this would be addressed in time for next month's report. In addition, he commented that the figure for Local Highway Improvements is misleading; this is because of the funding which had been provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Councillor Boden responded to members' questions.

Councillor Dorling expressed his surprise that, given the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic is having upon the community, the last meeting of the council's Finance and Policy Committee had been cancelled. He expressed the opinion that there is insufficient challenge of the council's finances and, also, he is surprised that the council had neither reviewed any of its existing policies nor introduced new ones in "this time of trouble".

In response to Councillor Dorling's comments, Councillor Boden stated that he is monitoring closely the council's financial situation and had "flexed" the current financial year's budgets to react to issues which had arisen as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. He added that the council would be reviewing all of its policies; this would be commenced following the Town Clerk's return from sickness absence. Councillor Boden expressed the opinion that it is unlikely that the majority of policies would need to be amended because of the Covid-19 situation.

Members decided that the financial year-to-date figures be noted.

F167/20. Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 2 September 2020 and the draft minutes of the meeting of that committee held on 21 September 2020

Members received the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 2 September 2020 and the draft minutes of the meeting of that committee held on 21 September 2020.

Members decided that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 2 September 2020 and the draft minutes of the meeting of that committee held on 21 September 2020 be noted.

F168/20. Draft minutes of the Community Projects Committee meeting held on 2 September 2020

Members received the draft minutes of the Community Projects Committee meeting held on 2 September 2020.

Councillor Mrs Mayor gave updates on certain projects, including that the works in relation to the pathway to the toilet at the allotments site would be commenced tomorrow. She mentioned also that she had spoken with Fenland District Council's Head of Leisure Services regarding the damaged benches at the Manor Leisure Centre (MLC); he had undertaken to discuss the situation with Freedom Leisure and to investigate whether it would be possible to adjust the coverage of one of the CCTV cameras at the MLC to include the location of the benches.

Members decided that the draft minutes of the Community Projects Committee meeting held on 21 September 2020 be noted.

F169/20 Information Only

(1) Invitations

Members noted that the council had received no invitations.

(2) Consultations

The George Hotel, Whittlesey – Application for a Temporary Pavement Licence

Councillor Miscandlon informed members that an application had been made to Fenland District Council by The George Hotel for a Temporary Pavement Licence (to allow the siting of tables and chairs within a defined area to the front of the property) (application reference number 20/1401/LAPAVE).

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Miscandlon, that the consultation response from Whittlesey Town Council be:

"The council, which wishes to assist local businesses, is supportive of this proposal in principle. The council does, however, have concerns that approval of the application could have a

detrimental impact upon the layout of the town's (Friday) market. Councillors' reading of the plan is that the existing location of the fish stall may need to be changed if this application were to be approved. As the market is operated by Fenland District Council, this is something that may have already been identified by your colleagues. In addition, one councillor wondered whether the siting of tables and chairs in the requested location would prevent access being achieved to one of the electricity power outlets at the Market Place. Also, councillors would not want to see a potential reduction in the amount of space available on the Market Place for attendees at its events.

Whittlesey Town Council requests that Fenland District Council (FDC) has regard the Town Council's comments when determining this application and if FDC approves this application, it includes a condition that the tables and chairs only be permitted to be so sited during the opening hours of the public house".

(3) Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of Whittlesey Town Council is scheduled for Thursday 19 November 2020; to commence at 7.30 pm (using the Zoom video conferencing system).

F170/20. Exclusion of the Public, including the Press

There was no necessity to exclude the public from the meeting for the consideration of any item of business.

F171/20. To discuss those items previously agreed at agenda item number F157/20

There were no such items for discussion.

Meeting finished at 9.00 pm

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Councillor David Mason
Chairman
Whittlesey Town Council