

WHITTLESEY TOWN COUNCIL

For the health, safety, and well-being of our community as a result of Covid-19 and following the instruction of the Prime Minister's address on 23rd March 2020 all Parish Council meetings will be held remotely until further notice. Whittlesey Town Council have resolved to use Zoom to facilitate the holding of meetings.

Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council held on Thursday 19th November 2020 at 7.30pm using Zoom video conferencing.

Present: Cllr Mason, Miscandlon, Dorling, Gerstner, Whitwell, Mrs Windle, Davies, Boden, Mrs Laws, Munns, Wicks.

Officer in Attendance: Mrs Sue Piergianni – Town Clerk & RFO

Recording: The recording is made as an aide memoir for the Clerk.

F172/20. To receive apologies from absent members and the reason for the apology.

Cllr Mrs Kay Mayor (personal).

F173/20 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 F191/20. Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act 1960).

1. "Commissioning an Inception Report for an A605 Whittlesey relief road, including suspension of Financial Standing Orders to permit commissioning of this Report without seeking multiple quotations" – Cllr Chris Boden. The waiving of the Financial Regulations would take place after the consultations, if approved, item 191/20 would be discussed immediately after. Cllr Boden advised if this tender was not accepted, the tender figure would not be included in the public minutes as it would be prejudicial to this company and commercially sensitive.

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 if 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

F174/20 Street Scene Officer Report

Cllr Miscandlon wished thanks would be expressed to the FDC Street Scene team for their hard work and dedication that has been shown during the pandemic.

F175/20 Police matters including CCTV Report

Cllr Mason was unable to attend the last meeting due to issues with Microsoft Teams, he advised there was only five people present. He will endeavour to attend the next meeting.

F176/20. To confirm and sign the Minutes from the Full Council Meeting held on Wednesday 14th October 2020

Members decided that the minutes of the meeting of Whittlesey Town Council held on 14 October 2020 be approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman when possible.

F177/20. Presentation by Mark Nokkert – Programme Development Manager (Cambs Acre – Fens Biosphere) & Catherine Weightman Natural England (15 Minutes)

Fens Biosphere: Big Skies, Big Vision for a brighter, more sustainable future

UNESCO Biosphere status provides a unique opportunity for the Fens to become a leader in sustainable growth and development and achieve global recognition. Biospheres bring people and organisations together to define and pursue a vision that strengthens and makes the most of the area's natural and cultural assets to meet its economic, social, and environmental needs.

A Fens Biosphere can help Local Authorities achieve their ambitions, by facilitating good, sustainable, and inclusive growth, leading to a balanced and resilient economy. Through cross-sector collaboration, adding value to existing initiatives, and acting as a platform for knowledge exchange, a Fens Biosphere can be a catalyst, opening new opportunities and accelerating positive economic, social, and environmental change.

As a Biosphere, the Fens will help grow and diversify the economy, it will strengthen the Fens brand to drive growth in sustainable tourism; benefit residents by engaging local communities in place-making, green spaces, and resilience building; and address the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss through investment in the area's natural and cultural capital.

A growing group of multi-sectoral partners are working together on submitting a Fens Biosphere nomination to UNESCO, to join 701 Biospheres in 124 countries (7 in the UK). The Fens Biosphere Partnership is keen for Councils in the area to get in touch, so we can learn how to shape the Biosphere plans to make your communities even better, resilient places.

Cllr Boden advised we used to have more peaty soil, Catherine advised the peat is declining, they are worried about the oxidation as the peat dries out and shrinks. Long term we need to look at conserving the deeper areas of peat, the soil needs to be kept wetter to prevent it oxidising and giving off the harmful green house gases, however we still need to be able to utilise the land as it is prime agricultural land, they may have to look at alternative crops.

Members asked why planting trees in fenland a good thing is not, and what the rewetting of the Fens can do. Catherine advised Tree planting can also depend on the species of the trees that are being planted. Trees suck water therefore drying out the peat and releasing more greenhouse gases.

F178/20 Public Forum

There was one member of the public present.

Mr Gray-Esson – Street pride plan to choose three or four areas with a reduced number of personnel at each site.

Mr Gray-Esson advised members he used to be the Chairman of the PPG at Queen Street doctor's surgery. At the AGM 12 months ago, he stood down but advised he would continue to assist the PPG until all issues were resolved. Numerous attempts have been made to both Lakeside Stanground and the Queen Street to resolve the PPG issues but to no avail. The practice manager who was in post was going to assist, however has now left and no information has been forthcoming, Mr Gray-Esson will continue to work on these issues.

F179/20 – County Councillor reports.

Kings Dyke Update – Cllr Boden – There continues to be good progress, one of the concerns will be when the bridge is built over the railway There have been some signs erected near the level crossing saying 'No Parking' as people have been stopping on the level crossing whilst waiting to enter the site. The signage showing the stages of the projects will be hopefully be updated monthly. The mud on the road issue is being addressed by Jones Bros and will be cleaned up more promptly in future.

Cllr Gerstner asked if there was any update on the Fenland DC walking and cycling policy, Cllr Boden advised a request had been made to expand this to include mobility vehicles, the strategy has been approved. Six schemes were highlighted across FDC, 2 in Whittlesey. Government funding will be sought to complete this project.

F180/20. Agenda items for Discussion.

GROWING FENLAND WHITTLESEY WORKING GROUP

The CPCA has ringfenced up to £1m to unlock opportunity and boost economic growth in each of its market towns through the Market Town Initiative. The north of the county has been given the working title of 'Growing Fenland' which links the proposed economic growth with important agricultural heritage.

Each town's Growing Fenland team must apply for funding for their local area by completing an extensive bid document. Match funding is to be provided where possible and any funding allocation by CPCA must be spent by March 2022.

One project has already successfully drawn down funding from the CPCA. The bid was approved at the CPCA Board meeting held on 30th September 2020 for £56,500 for Interactive Highway Signs in Whittlesey

Through Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Department, we are placing an order with a registered company named SWARCO to supply & install three interactive highway signs CCC will sign up Whittlesey's three highway signs to their central hub and have agreed to cover the cost of staffing support 24/7, ongoing maintenance and insurance. This will reduce to the cost to Whittlesey Town Council in the future.

Two further bids were submitted on 30th October 2020

Whittlesey Heritage Walk - £218,179

Mark the route using wayfinding markers and ground plaques for the key site and produce a booklet available online and hardcopy to follow the route. This includes all purposed route improvements and additional seating. Location information for Kings Dyke/Must Farm, Whittlesey Cemetery, Lattersey Nature Reserve and Whittlesea Railway Station will be noted in the route booklet. In addition, a Heritage Route App will be developed like the Wisbech Merchant Trail. A total of 29 information will be installed at regular intervals along the route these will provide location information for Kings Dyke/Must Farm, Whittlesey Cemetery, Lattersey Nature Reserve and Whittlesea Rail Station.

Whittlesey Heritage Centre - £500,000

Kings Dyke Nature Reserve is on the edge of Whittlesey offering a wonderful outdoor space to local people and visitors. The Reserve appeals to a wide range of residents from old to young, offering opportunities to be active, enjoy nature and get out in the fresh air.

Education trips already take place to the Reserve, but lack of an indoor facility currently limits the potential of the Reserve for education.

At the same time, it is recognised that Kings Dyke is close to the site where the Must Farm Bronze Age settlement was found and excavated. While the actual finds from Must Farm will be interpreted in Peterborough Museum and Flag Fen, there is an opportunity to expand activities at Kings Dyke to include the site's cultural history, heritage, and archaeology, as well as that of its immediate context. This includes the history of the adjacent brickworks, and related topics in industrial archaeology. Through small exhibitions, the use of replica objects and handling collections, or digital technology, these subjects can be discussed and explored in situ. It will be important that the Centre works in partnership with other cultural attractions nearby, particularly with Peterborough Museum, Flag Fen, and Whittlesey Museum, to avoid any duplication of facilities and activities, and to ensure a collaborative and complementary programme for young people and adult learners.

The proposed Whittlesey Heritage Centre will add opportunities to.

- Learn more about the local history of Whittlesey and surrounding villages.
- Be enthralled by the Bronze Age and specifically the Must Farm settlement.
- Discover the original community that was housed and worked around the brick pits on the site of the Reserve itself
- Develop an ecological learning experience based on the Heritage Centre's design and the nature reserve location
- Increase the number community events on site
- Develop the education offer further by utilising indoor classroom space, widening the learning experience to include young people above primary school age
- Develop the volunteer group supporting Kings Dyke further with volunteers supporting the management and development of Whittlesey Heritage Centre, as well as the Reserve
- Use Whittlesey Heritage Centre for diverse activities unrelated to the Reserve or Heritage where attending the Heritage centre is preferable – for example.
- Arts and Craft activities and groups
- Indoor healthy sessions, such as healthy hearts or yoga

- Mums and Tots activity sessions
- Healthy cooking
- Health education sessions

These activities would all take place in a facility that fits into the Reserve environment, is ecologically sound and is designed to cost as little to run as possible. Critically for the town, Whittlesey Heritage Centre will add another reason to draw people living within one hours drive to visit Whittlesey. Increasing tourist numbers to the town, via the Heritage Centre and Nature reserve, supports the local economy and local jobs. This project proposal is linked to other ongoing local initiatives will ensure that Whittlesey remains a vibrant Fenland market town for the future.

The proposed Heritage Centre will give the existing Whittlesey Museum, at present unable to display many of its artefacts in cramped surroundings, an opportunity of telling the wider story of Whittlesey and its heritage. This presents tremendous opportunities for complementary stories to be told at the right scale across all of Whittlesey, headlined by Kings Dyke and making more existing local facilities, skills and knowledge and developing a stronger sense of place and local pride. Local communities will be involved in this project, helping to shape it for the community of Whittlesey.

A Testimonials from Arts Council England and Professor Francis Pryor, MBE, MA, PhD, FSA and been received and within the next few days a further testimonial from The Cambridge Museums Partnership and within time to submit to the CPCA Board in support of Growing Fenland Whittlesey working group extensive bid document.

Following an independent consultant report commissioned by Growing Fenland Whittlesey working group and submitted with Whittlesey Heritage Centre extensive bid application.

Cllr Mrs Laws proposed Whittlesey Town Council tonight to agree to underwrite 50% of any revenue deficit on the proposed Whittlesey Heritage Centre for a period of the first five years. It is understood that Fenland District Council will underwrite the remaining 50%.

For Whittlesey Town Council a figure of £28,750 pa. but what has not been investigated and to be challenged is a management cost of £80,000 and £15,000 NDR. This was seconded by Cllr Mason, with a unanimous vote in favour.

We know grant funding is available to support a local project and this will be explored once advised of the CPCA Board decision on Wednesday 25th November if Growing Fenland Whittlesey working group bid application is successful. Please also keep in mind a Whittlesey Heritage Centre would be built out and open during 2022.

FUTURE PROJECT.

This is a future bid proposal. Growing Fenland Whittlesey with Chatteris, March & Wisbech working groups agreed to work together and set aside £100,000 from the CPCA ringfenced £1million for Parking Enforcement in Fenland Towns and Villages. An important part of the process is to improve existing highway yellow lines and upgrade parking information signage including within Fenland car parks.

This program of works is expected to take approximately 18 months. Before Parking Enforcement can be introduced it is necessary to gain the appropriate authority and to ensure its visually clear if parking is prohibited or limited. Let me make it clear to Councillors and Members of the Public –**there are NO plans to introduce paid parking charges within Fenland.** Parking Enforcement is being introduced to stop illegal parking and vehicles over staying time limited areas.

PROPERTY WORKING GROUP.

Cllr Dave Mason – The quotations were received from the three contractors for erection of safety railings, these were £996.00, £760.00 and £1210.00, unfortunately despite being asked to quote for the same type of railings, there were some discrepancies, Cllr Mason will go back to the contractors and request further details of their quotations.

MVAS PROGRESS REPORT.

Cllr Alex Miscandlon advised members he has been liaising with Fenland Electrical who are endeavouring to have all the brackets installed over the weekend and the cameras up asap after. Cllr Miscandlon advised there was still a query on one lamp post and the Clerk was speaking with BB regarding this and that the camera in Turves would stay as it until a more suitable location could be found.

PUBLIC ACCESS ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) CHARGING POINTS – WHITTLESEY.

Cllr Eamonn Dorling representing Whittlesey Business Forum. WBF were looking for support from WTC to support their initiative for the installation of EV points in Whittlesey. Cllr Dorling suggested that one be placed in each of the FDC car parks. Cllr Boden advised that some of the regulations for use of the car parks need reviewing and as part of Growing Fenland this will be investigated as well as civil parking enforcement.

F181/20. To receive Councillor & outside body reports.

Cllr Miscandlon reported that the Heritage Centre Group held a meeting in November, the next meeting is scheduled for the 18th December 2020.

Cllr Mrs Laws is the appointed as Fenland District Council representative on the following committees and considered Whittlesey Town Council Members would be interested in this update.

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Flood & Water Partnership (Flow Partnership), Water Resources East (WRE) and ADA Conference.

Having been advised from the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs of a Flood & Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme, creating resilient places.

In the 2020 Budget Government announced a £200 million fund for innovative projects to help communities to be more resilient to flooding and coastal defences.

Following above meetings discussed fully with Paul Sharman at North Level Internal Drainage Board, completely agree we need a feasibility project/study and knowing the deadline for ideas was Friday 13th November 2020, Paul submitted the following to Julia Beeden at Cambridgeshire County Council.

This would be the first step to register our interest for a feasibility project/study.

We would like to see a joined-up approach to the 'Fens' incorporating Water Resources (WRE and the proposed two new reservoirs), the long-heralded Fens Waterway link, Flood risk and resilience to the effects of climate change i.e., both flood and drought, use of natural resources such as Crowland and Cowbitt Washes for water storage, enhancing conservation and the environment together with tourism, health and wellbeing, reduce flood risk aiding development and boosting the economy in the fens.

The starter for the above project would be a feasibility project for the Welland and Nene or possibly wider fens; this would work well with several work streams already in existence but would hopefully pull all together to look at the bigger picture rather than all working in isolation. It would also be a real cross boundary piece of work incorporating Lincolnshire County Council and Cambridgeshire County Council, Fenland District Council, Peterborough City Council, South Holland District Council, the Environment Agency, North Level, Welland and Deepings and South Holland Internal Drainage Boards together with WRE, Anglian Water, Lincolnshire, and Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trusts, NFU and other landowner/community groups.

The feasibility should be able to look at all options including potentially altering flows in Internal Drainage Board catchments to supply additional water to the River Welland, using the watercourses as both water transfer and navigation routes, using washlands to store the excess water in times of flood and equally importantly to use the resource for both public water supply and agricultural in the dry summer months. This could go further to capture the aspirations of the Wisbech Garden Town and moving of tidal limits on the Nene.

F182/20. Finance & Policy – To report the minutes from the Finance & Policy Meeting held on Monday 16th November 2020.

Members received the draft minutes of the finance and policy committee meeting held on Monday 16th November 2020.

F183/20 To report the financial documents

Cllr Boden thanked the Clerk for keeping on top of things prior to her absence and soon as she was back.

- To report the bank reconciliation to 31st October 2020 – Members received the bank reconciliation.
- To report the list of payments & To report the list of uncashed payments Vouchers 127 – 142 to the value of £6877.97.
- To report the year-to-date figures (2020/2021)- The figures were reported.
- To discuss the grant application from Whittlesey in Bloom. (missed F & P deadline) – Cllr Miscandlon proposed £500.00, seconded Cllr Whitwell with a unanimous vote in favour.
- Donation to the Royal British Legion poppy appeal £500,00, this was proposed by Cllr Mason, seconded by Cllr Miscandlon with a unanimous vote in favour.

F184/20 To report the draft minutes from the Planning Meeting on Monday 16th November 2020 and receive the minutes from Wednesday 4th November 2020.

The minutes were reported and received.

F185/20 To report the draft minutes from the Community Projects Meeting on Wednesday 4th November 2020.

The minutes were reported.

F186/20 Information Only.

Reverend Phil Marsh has been appointed by the Bishop as the Interim Priest before a new Rector is appointed in the next 12 / 18 months.

F187/20 Invitations.

Fenland Transport and Access Group (TAG) – The Clerk to see if Cllr Mrs Mayor would be willing to be the representative on this committee.

F188/20. Consultations

Commissioning an Inception Report for an A605 Whittlesey relief road, including suspension of Financial Standing Orders to permit commissioning of this Report without seeking multiple quotations” – Cllr Chris Boden.

Cllr Boden proposed a formal motion to suspend WTC's Financial Regulations Section 10 Contracts, item 10.4 in respect of the requirement for tendering. This has been done previously but should only be done in exceptional circumstances. The exceptional circumstances which apply in this case are as follows:

1. The delay if we were to go through the tendering procedure would mean that the inception report would be produced too late for us to use it, if it is positive for the scheme, to put political pressure on ALL the various candidates for Mayor of the Combined Authority to get them to agree that they will, if elected, recommend to the Combined Authority for adoption as one of the CPCA's major infrastructure schemes. Purdah kicks in in March so WTC will need to pass a resolution in February to use this report before it becomes illegal to do so until after the May election. If the report is produced too late it would mean that the chance of the Relief Road scheme being adopted by the CPCA would be significantly reduced. going through the tender process would delay WTC's right to publish the Report until after the Mayoral Election and whoever is elected Mayor would then be under far less effective pressure to adopt the scheme.
2. To be as effective as possible, the inception report needs to be produced by a firm
 - a) of national standing but with staff based locally
 - b) with successful experience of delivering numerous £multi-million major infrastructure projects from scratch to completion
 - c) with recent substantial experience of delivering a project in the specific local context of Whittlesey and its flood riskThe firm suggested satisfies all these criteria and I doubt that any other firm could do so.
3. The true cost of the work required to produce this Report is at least 50% more than is quoted - going through a formal tendering process will run the risk that we lose some or all that special discount. but the price is such anyway that we can clearly demonstrate value for money.
4. We would have difficulty independently determining the appropriate scope to organise an effective tender for such a specialised requirement - obviously, we could not use the proprietary information from the quotation we have already received to do so.

Any one of the above 4 reasons would provide sufficient grounds, to serve the wider interests of Whittlesey residents, to justify the proposed suspension of Financial Regulations in respect of tendering. The combination of all four provides an extremely strong case for the suspension Proposal accept tender of £6800.00 plus VAT from Royal Haskoning stage 0A inception report, seconded Cllr Miscandlon, unanimous vote in favour.

The proposition to suspend the standing orders was seconded by Cllr Miscandlon with a unanimous vote in favour.

Cllr Wicks asked the following questions. Why has it this item come so late in the day? Why was the report not discussed at F & P? Why was it in the press prior to Cllrs being made aware. Cllr Boden responded as follows: The item was on the agenda, but the report had not been received hence why it could not be discussed at F & P, and the information was in the press as Cllr Boden had been advising members, he had been working on this for several months.

Cllr Dorling advised there were some errors in the press report and recommended these be corrected to ensure that any progress may be impacted on the back of incorrect information. Cllr Boden asked Cllr Dorling to contact the press to advise of any factual errors.

22.00 Standing Orders were suspended.

Cllr Gerstner asked for timescales – Cllr Boden advised once confirmation given, it would approximately six weeks, the works would be carried out via desk top studies and public consultation. In essence we should receive the report in January (due to Christmas & New Year), this will give WTC time to publicise the report and contact all the prospective candidates standing for the position of the Mayor for the Combined Authority allowing them to read the report and agree to support it if they become Mayor, all the information will be in the public domain.

Cllr Davies asked why are we paying and not FDC? Cllr Boden advised that we should not be paying but no one else will pay for the initial report as it is a revenue cost, one the initially report has been completed and shows a positive outcome any costs moving forward will be capital costs and will be the responsibility of the Combined authority.

Cllr Boden proposal acceptance of the tender in the sum of ££6800.00 plus VAT from Royal Haskoning to undertake the stage 0A inception report, this was seconded by Cllr Miscandlon with a unanimous vote in favour.

F189/20. Date of next meeting – Thursday 17th December 2020.

F190/20. Exclusion of the Public, including the Press.

F191/20. To discuss those exempt items previously agreed at agenda item F173/2020

Meeting Closed 22.15

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Cllr David Mason
Mayor of Whittlesey