

# WHITTLESEY TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Full Council held on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 7.30pm at Peel House, 8 Queen Street, Whittlesey, PE7 1AY.**

**Present:** Cllr Mayor, Arman, Black, Boden, Dorling, Laws, Mockett, Nawaz, Sennitt-Clough, Wainwright, Wicks.

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

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

## **F111/2023 To receive apologies from absent members and the reason for the apology.**

Cllr Gerstner & Dickinson (personal)

## **F112/2023. To receive members' declarations of disclosable pecuniary, non-disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests in relation to any agenda items discussed later in the agenda.**

Cllr Laws – Portfolio holder for planning at FDC and will take no part in any planning discussions but will advise if requested on planning policy.

## **F113/2023. Street Scene Officer Report & CCTV report.**

Members received the Street Scene Report

## **F114/2023. Police Report**

The meeting was cancelled, the next meeting will be 10<sup>th</sup> August 2023

## **F115/2023. To confirm and sign the Minutes from the Full Council Meeting held on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023.**

Cllr Boden requested that the following comment be noted and referred back to the June Full Council minutes item F99/23 Burnthouse farm after the wording 'members voted majority in favour the councillors listed' insert the following Cllr Mockett offered to withdraw his application, to allow Cllr Wicks to stand, however Cllr wicks refused the offer. This was seconded by Cllr Sennitt-Clough, with a majority vote in favour of this amendment.

Cllr Mayor advised members that the Principal of SHS Mrs Dawn White has been offered dates in September and October to present to the council.

Cllr Dorling asked for definition of the word 'unanimous' on the basis that several of the votes in the previous minutes indicate they were carried unanimously, he feels that was incorrect and it was a majority. Cllr Boden suggested that each time the word unanimously is in the minutes, it should be changed to majority.

## **F116/2023 Public Forum**

To allow any member of the public to address the council. Time allowed 15 minutes in total to be split equally between the total amount wishing to speak.

32 members of the public were present.

Steve Robertson, local business owner – wished to make comment on the previous full council meeting in June. His comments were as follows:

As some of you will know I have had the privilege to sit through a great many council meetings over the past 15 or so years. I have been privy to some very entertaining discussions; I have been amused; I have been educated; I have nearly fallen asleep during some really boring meetings, but I have never before felt embarrassed the way I felt at the last meeting during the agenda item F99/2023 regarding the allocation of councillors to outside bodies.

I sat and watched a blatant, and here I thought hard for an appropriate word, I watched a blatant stitch-up by the majority party. It was definitely a case of, 'no matter how experienced you are, if you're not in our gang you are not going to be chosen'.

Then we had the chaos of the voting. Now I admit I don't know the correct procedure for voting at council meetings, but it didn't feel right for the chair to ask for votes "for" a nominee, then just announce 'majority' and go to the next vote. Surely a complete vote should be taken so that the public can also see the councillors who would vote 'against' or 'abstain'.

There was also the case of the miscount spotted by a member of the public, the councillor who changed their vote on a recount and a councillor who didn't seem to know for what or for whom they were voting.

On a different topic. Agenda item F95/2023 was for the election of a Council leader and deputy. Whittlesey Council has managed for around 48 years with a position of combined council leader and mayor, so why do we suddenly need to split them now? I cynically thought that this is a ploy by the reducing majority group to ensure that they have two more positions of power on the council, gaining yet more control. At Monday's meeting of the Finance and Planning committee, in answer to a question, Councillor Boden confirmed that one reason for having a council leader and deputy is that it will give more people the chance to have a position, an excellent idea in principle, but the majority group will always have the final say on who is elected to those positions. Again, as I said earlier, "if you are not in our gang, you won't get chosen".

In order to show that this isn't just a position in name only, when the new leader of the council has been chosen by the majority group could he or she come to the full council meeting prepared to say what their objectives are for the coming year and how they plan to achieve them.

I hope that one of the councillors' tables this as an agenda item and ensures that it happens.

Cllr Boden raised a point of order as his name was mentioned in the comments from Mr Robertson, and he was misquoted, 'it would only fair to give him the opportunity to correct the quote and it was agreed by all members. That it would give all members the opportunity to serve as mayor regardless of their political affiliation. It was not to give more positions to the majority party.

Mr Alan Bessant – Representing Saxongate residents' group. (

In recent weeks we have seen a significant increase in dust and noise complaints.

It has taken four weeks and intensive lobbying for the Environment Agency (EA) to agree that they will attend a liaison meeting and they take 20 days to respond on our enquiries. Likewise, it has taken 4 weeks for Whittlesey Town Council to confirm attendance.

Saxongate members impress on the council the impact that the Saxon Pit site is having on people. Key operators are still not achieving noise and dust targets and permitted emission levels.

In 2008 the local government minerals and waste report predicted a risk to health and a loss of amenity for local residents which may be reduced with mitigation measures.

We need the councils and agencies to remain engaged and support the local population.

Mr Philip Cumberland – Street cleaner - can WTC purchase hire one to sweep the streets, the majority could be completed by machine, however a person could sweep. He advised members he had calculated the cost based on 7000 householders would be £38,416 per year, which equates approximately to £5.49 per household.

Joe Jennings – WEFA – They were offered the library however on investigation, asbestos was found and the cost to remove it was prohibitive. They were then offered a room in the Manor, where they have been since November 2022. He was advised a few weeks ago that the football teams moved out due to asbestos. His wife who is one of the volunteers has been undertaking tests due to breathing issues. Why were they not advised about the asbestos? He would like to task the council with finding out as much information as possible about the asbestos. What did the council know about the asbestos? and is there a register about the location of the asbestos within the Manor and are people being exposed and subject to asbestos poisoning.

David Mason – Last Friday, to hear resignation of Ray Whitwell, the council and town has lost an excellent servant. Pivotal in Music festival, and allotments thank him for all his work over the years.

### F117/2023 Agenda items for Discussion.

#### **1. Appointments to outside bodies – Cllr Wainwright commented as follows:**

I don't believe that anyone present at the last full council meeting, whether as a participant or an observer in the public gallery, could honestly describe the proceedings as anything other than chaotic.

As a Town Council, we must act professionally and thoughtfully to represent our electorate. We failed to do that. As a council, we could do better. We must do better.

I want to touch on some of the failings that occurred - not out of any desire for 'point-scoring', but so that lessons may be learned, and this council is never again in the position of embarrassing itself so badly.

That the meeting was embarrassing has been highlighted by the many messages I and other councillors have received from members of the public - by email, through Facebook, by text message, and many more given verbally.

Those messages overwhelmingly pointed to a perception of bias in presenting the topic.

Leaving aside the issue of whether or not there was actual bias, it is undeniable that there was a perception of bias - which is against both legislation and case law.

In the first instance, several suggestions were made for the various appointments. These had been the subject of an earlier meeting from which the Independent Councillors were excluded and had no opportunity to give their input. Worse still, we had all been asked, in the middle of May, for our interests in these appointments. I and other independent councillors replied with details of which appointments we were interested in. At June's month's meeting the Town Clerk confirmed that these expressions of interest had been passed on to the mayor. Yet, in the last meeting, the council leader stated that he was unaware of our responses. I have yet to receive any explanation as to why our responses and wishes were either discarded, lost or ignored. I feel that the omission of any such explanation is disrespectful to the extreme.

Then came a series of votes for the various nominations. Describing the voting as chaotic is badly understating the true state of affairs. Councillors were discussing the mechanics of voting whilst votes were being carried out - questions were asked as to whether each councillor had just one vote or could vote for more than one candidate. The voting was unclear. The counting of votes was erratic. On one occasion, a vote had to be re-conducted due to the confusion that had arisen and as was pointed out by a member of the public, the result of the second vote differed from the first!

Critical though I am of the chaotic nature of the voting process, there is an even more severe failing here. Our standing orders have very detailed procedures in section 12 for the voting on appointments. What occurred was so far removed from the correct procedure that it rendered the whole process invalid.

If a formal complaint were raised on this matter, it would, without a doubt, be upheld. I even considered raising a Special Motion of Rescission to have the results of the votes set aside. I decided against this

step as I believe it would only cause delays, more embarrassment, and bring the council into further disrepute rather than move things forward to a, hopefully, better understanding.

Though I have argued against formal complaints, Recission or Motions of Censure, I cannot prevent any other councillor pursuing those options if they so desire. There is no Political Block Decision Making behind the scenes here.

That is about all I have to say on this matter, except to ask, through the chair, whether or not any of the independent councillors can expect to receive an explanation of why their returns were either discarded, lost or ignored?

Cllr Boden advised there has been a misunderstanding of process and new councillors may not be aware of this, the method of appointing individuals to outside bodies is a decision that they make usually after the annual meeting and it is only the councillors that are involved in making the decision. Apart from advising of the vacancies which exist and recording the results, The clerk plays no part in that process and any suggestion that the clerk had failed to pass on information is quite unfair as the Clerk is in no position in this body to speak out for herself. Cllr Wainwright suggestion there had been a position of bias and he is correct in that, and the reason he is correct is that Cllr Whitwell made a mistake and admitted that and apologised, but what happened was he read out the list of all potential nominations submitted from the ruling group, that was not a statement saying all the position will be filled by these members. What happened should have allowed all persons who wished to be considered to put there names forward, unfortunately there was an unwillingness to listen to the fact that a mistake had been made and it was not the intention that all elected to these positions would be from the ruling group and that was really unfortunate.

We should have voted on every appointment individually and not en mass, this should have happened from the beginning. Cllr Whitwell was sent some unpleasant emails which were uncalled for as he has served the town for many years, as Mr Mason stated, we have lost a great councillor. There was no purpose to exclude any councillors from this process. This could be done better in the future as there was a clear perception of bias, as the Chair of F & P he is more than happy to examine the way this process takes place before next year. Cllr Wainwright, advised he made no condemnation of the clerk whatsoever.

**2. How should communications be managed** – Cllr Dorling has concern that we do not communicate particularly well and asked who in WTC is responsible and who should be in charge of these communications, there has been the introduction of a new Facebook page set up and the communications on this are sometimes inaccurate, information is put on as the first person which is fine, but it should be first person singular and not first person plural, therefore if you received a response, saying I will do that, a single Councillor should not be transacting business on behalf of the whole, he suggested the word 'we' should be used instead of the word 'I', there are instances where the people who are organising the Facebook page have blocked someone, that person cannot see the comments or the reactions that the person has made, this also cannot be good for clear communication, therefore we should be very careful what we put on Facebook, if we had a councillors meeting on a Saturday one of the first things we do is to establish if we can use the information under the rules of GDPR, we could as an organisation get into trouble without GDPR for some of the information that we put on Facebook. He asked again who should be controlling the communication coming out from the council? Cllr Sennitt-Clough advised Cllr Dorling does bring up some valid points, but refused to be lectured on social media when he and other colleagues are putting out incorrect information, a handout was given out. Cllr Boden advised following the elections it was agreed that Cllr Laws, Dickinson and Arman were to look at all our social media. He was concerned about Facebook accounts being blocked, Cllr Arman confirmed they do not block anyone from the group, they have auto admin who accept people into the group, if a person wishing to join has no picture or has an account is less than a year old, it is flagged up and an actual person will review this as we do not want any advertising or scam accounts. Cllr Wainwright is concerned that councillors have blocked members of the public. Cllr Laws advised they are updating WTC website to ensure all road closures, street works, music events, press releases and information about the parishes. Cllr Dorling proposed a meeting to discuss communications, seconded Cllr Wainwright, the chair suggested the item will go for community projects for initial discussion, then onto F & P.

**3. Car Boot Fair – Manor** – Cllr Black as there is a shortage of funds, perhaps instead of charging people for a pitch, say it is free, but could they put some money in a bucket for Carers Together which is one of the mayors' charities. The proposed date for this is 20<sup>th</sup> August 2023

**4. Junior Councillors** – Cllr Black – There is a lot of negative talk about youngsters from residents in the town and we need to nurture them a little, if we can push them in the right way, we could reach out to local schools and see if youngsters who could be elected by the year group, sit on the council as junior councillors and input to the council, these may wish to take up a future in politics. Cllr Boden they could not have a vote, but we could amend our standing orders to allow them to speak, we need to get SHS on board. Cllr Boden will work on this projects, Cllr Sennitt- Clough suggested contact is also made with other youth organisations in the town.

**5. Manor Benches** – Cllr Mayor read Cllr Gerstner's report. There has been ongoing vandalism of picnic benches on the Manor Field, Whittlesey. For those councillors unaware of the history. 8 new (2 of which are disabled accessible) were a Street Pride and Whittlesey Town Council project by Cllr Gerstner. I applied and obtained funding from the Glassmore Wind Turbine fund of approx. £5000.00 and WTC also funding some £5000. Permission was obtained from FDC and fully consulted throughout. The 8 benches were professionally installed in concrete bases in Augustu 2021. With the first 4 weeks minor vandalism had taken place on two of the benches in the form or minor/moderate fire damage. Within 8 weeks the first more serious damage was done to one of the disabled tables. During 2021 3 more incidents of damage were reported.

In 2022 a further 4 incidents of vandalism were reported including 1 bench that was completely destroyed – having been set on fire. (Police informed). During 2023 a further 4 incidents to date have taken place, the latest 2 having occurred this week.

Mr Alan Hobbs the Vice Chairman of Whittlesey Street Pride has throughout repaired the benches. He now has no further parts and is finding the exercise somewhat futile in both is time and resources.

I would like the council to discuss the future of these picnic benches, with the following options.

1. Does WTC want to fund someone to carry on repairing these picnic benches?
2. Mr Hobbs will maintain the safety and integrity by removing damaged/dangerous parts.
3. When a picnic bench becomes unserviceable – do WTC have it taken out.
4. There may be a possibility of replacing with metal benches, however funding would need to be sought.

Cllr Mockett suggested this item go to community projects and commented as to why are they are putting wooden benches back we should be putting metal benches. Cllr Black advised there are some very stylish benches in concrete and metal. Cllr Dorling has spoken with Mr Hobbs, the metal bench that is there is very infrequently used, the current benches are recycled plastic. Mr Hobbs has investigated a few options, if a weak component is removed a stronger one attached, this would hopefully prevent the individuals from kicking and breaking them. We may be able to make one bench out of two broken benches. Members suggested this item be referred to the Community Projects Committee and invite Mr Hobbs to attend, Cllr Black was asked to obtain some comparisons for benches in metal and concrete. It is a minority that are causing the damage.

**6. HGV & Rat Runs** – Cllr Boden advised over recent weeks he has received complaints about HGV's using back roads due to City Fibre working in the area. Thory's were contacted and advised their drivers to keep to speed limits and drive with care on back roads. By the end of the decade Cemetery Road and Kelly Vision roundabout are going to be beyond capacity, by 2030 it will take 6 minutes to get through Kelly Vision roundabout and 4 mins for the Cemetery Road one. There are number of routes that will be utilised by vehicles in the future. We have approached this by seeking a southern relief road, WTC paid for an inception report, the north was not an option but to the south was. The next stage is the strategic business case has been financed and will be tendered out by FDC there response may not be back by the end of 2023, the next stage would be to seek funding for the outline business case. We are doing everything we can to push forward the concept and the building of a southern relief road.

**F118/2023. To receive Councillor & outside body written reports.**

There were no outside body reports.

**F119/2023. To report the minutes from the Finance & Policy Meeting on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and approve any donation requests.**

The minutes from the F & P meeting were reported.

Whittlesey Extravaganza – and The Bobby Scheme. Cllr Boden proposed that neither organisation is offered a donation, this was agreed by majority vote.

**F120/2023 To report the financial documents.**

- To report the bank reconciliation to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 – the bank reconciliation was reported.
- To report the list of payments & uncashed payments. Voucher 61 to 79 to the value of 9665.25 were proposed.
- To report the year-to-date figures (30<sup>th</sup> June 2023) – the figures were reported.

**F121/2023. To receive the minutes from the Planning meeting on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023 and report the minutes from Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

The minutes from the planning meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> June were received and the minutes from 17<sup>th</sup> July were reported.

**F122/2023. Consultations**

There were no consultations.

**F123/2023 Information only.**

There was no information.

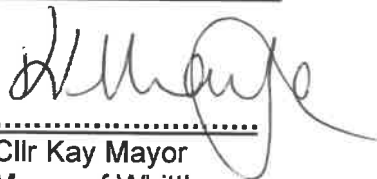
**F124/2023 Invitations.**

Cllr Mayor advised members there will be a short service at 10.45 on 27<sup>th</sup> July organised by the RBL to remember the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Korean War.

Cllr Mayor advised members of a production of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang on 29<sup>th</sup> July at SHS is being performed by the 'Young Technicians Academy'.

**F125/2023. Date of next meeting –Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023**

**Meeting closed: 8.50**

  
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Cllr Kay Mayor  
Mayor of Whittlesey.

**Whittlesey Town Council**  
**PAYMENTS LIST**

Voucher Code	Date	Minute	Bank	Cheque No	Description	Supplier	VAT Type	Net	VAT	Total
60	31/05/2023		Barclays Current Acco	online	Donation	CCC Summer Reading Chal	E	500.00		500.00
61	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Clerks Pension	Pension	LGSS Pension	E	796.75		796.75
62	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Hanging Baskets	Hanging Baskets	Delifand Nursery	S	1,884.50	376.90	2,261.40
63	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Office Water	Office Water	Anglian Water	S	161.10	14.45	175.55
64	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Window Cleaning	Window Cleaning	H20 Pure - Mark Nicholas	E	12.00		12.00
65	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	salaries	Salaries	Staff Salaries WTC	E	2,150.36		2,150.36
66	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	tax & NI	Tax & NI	HMRC	E	911.37		911.37
67	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Alot 32A	Allot Key Refund	Mrs Digby Allot 32A	E	30.00		30.00
68	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	WTC Insurance	Insurance	Zurich Municipal	E	1,569.32		1,569.32
69	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	website	Website SLA	SG Computing Ltd	E	140.00		140.00
70	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Interpretation Board a	Platinum Wood	Alan Hobbs	E	110.66		110.66
71	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	June	Laminator and Extension lead	Peterborough Office Supplies	S	145.73	29.15	174.88
72	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Allot 41A	Office Cleaning	Clare Lynch	E	253.00		253.00
73	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	July & August 2023 m	Allot Key Refund	Sara Branney Allot 41A	E	30.00		30.00
74	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	phone	Temporary Event Notice	Fenland District Council	E	42.00		42.00
75	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Copier lease	PHONES LEASE	EVAD	S	75.32	15.06	90.38
76	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	NDR	Copier Lease	CF Corporate finance	S	274.00	54.80	328.80
77	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	copy cost	NDR	Fenland District Council	E	60.00		60.00
78	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Bank Charges	Photocopies	Ethos	S	1.36	0.27	1.63
79	21/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Bank Charges	Bank Charges / Interest	Barclays	E	27.15		27.15
<b>Total</b>								<b>9,174.62</b>	<b>490.63</b>	<b>9,665.25</b>

## Whittlesey Town Council RECEIPTS LIST

Voucher Code	Date	Minute	Bank	Receipt No	Description	Supplier	VAT Type	Net	VAT	Total
21 Bank Charges & Interest	05/06/2023		Barclays Reserve Accc	online	Bank Charges / Interest	Barclays	E	148.85		148.85
26 Allotments	05/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Forster 30	Allotment Payments	Allotment Holders	E	71.00		71.00
25 Commercial Rent	05/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Commercial Rent	Commercial Rent	ISA-Cam Rent	E	330.00		330.00
24 Bank Charges & Interest	06/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Loyalty Reward	Bank Interest	Fenland Youth Radio	E	3.73		3.73
28 Heritage Walk Yearly reserve	09/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Whittlesey Heritage W	Heritage Walk Maintenance	Fenland District Council	E	15,000.00		15,000.00
23 Commercial Rent	14/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Rent	Commercial Rent	Fenland Youth Radio	E	110.00		110.00
29 Allotments	14/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Owen 67, Brown 81B,	Allotment Payments	Allotment Holders	E	177.50		177.50
22 Commercial Rent	19/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Rent & Deposit	Commercial Rent	Fenland Electrical Services	E	440.00		440.00
27 Residential Rent / Costs	30/06/2023		Barclays Current Acco	Flat A & B	Flat A & B Rent	Peterborough city council	E	1,390.04		1,390.04
<b>Total</b>								<b>17,671.12</b>		<b>17,671.12</b>