

# WHITTLESEY TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 7.30pm at Peel House, 8 Queen Street, Whittlesey, PE7 1AY.

**Present:** Cllr Mayor, Laws, Sennit-Clough, Whitwell, Boden, Nawaz, Black, Arman, Wicks, Gerstner, Dorling, Mockett, Dickinson, David Mason (retiring Mayor & Leader)

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

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

### **F69/23. To Elect the Mayor to the Council for the year until May 2024**

Cllr Mayor was proposed by Cllr Laws, seconded by Cllr Wicks, there were no other nominations, Members voted unanimously to Elect Cllr Mayor for the term until May 2024

### **F70/23. To sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.**

Cllr Mayor signed the Declaration of Office.

### **F71/23. To Elect the Deputy Mayor to the Council for the year until May 2024.**

Cllr Laws was proposed by Cllr Sennit-Clough, seconded by Cllr Mockett there were no other nominations, Members voted unanimously to Elect Cllr Laws for the term until May 20

**F72/23. If a Councillor is not present or has not signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, 'The council at that meeting may so permit the signing at later meeting that is fixed by the Council' LGA 1972, s83 (4).**

The Chairman confirmed all declarations have been signed.

### **F73/2023 To receive apologies from absent members and the reason for the apology.**

Cllr Wainwright (personal)

**F74/2023. 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 advised she is the portfolio holder for planning and therefore will only advise on policy and will no part in discussion or vote.

Standing orders were suspended at 7.37.

### **F75/2023 – Presentation by Mr Martin Curtis – issues relation to '15 minute city and 20 minute neighbourhood planning concepts' (15 minutes)**

Mr Curtis works on politics and communications around planning, he has never worked on any projects in Whittlesey or fenland and is making a presentation as a resident.

Nothing wrong with the concept conspiracy theory on social media and this should have been discussed during our neighbourhood plans. During past 9 years he has spoken about 15 and 20 minute limited, any new developments should have the 15 / 20 minutes to ensure anyone can walk or cycle to most amenities within this timescale. The council should not dismiss this concept. Maybe think about if the post office in Coates was not there, this would be prime example. WTC should not endorse the notion of 15 minutes cities put about by conspiracy theorists', WTC should look at embracing the concept within the reach of people.

This is a sound concept for developers carry out road and school improvements for example Sir Harry Smith.

Cllr Gerstner has been lobbied extensively by residents and the comments were, Whittlesey historic agricultural town, drugs and crime issues still need resolving, we have no hospital, health services in a dire state, train station too far away, poor youth provision, manor in poor state,

Cllr Wicks asked for new members to show respect and not speak over each other.

Standing orders were resumed 19.55.

#### **F76/2023. Street Scene Officer Report & CCTV report.**

There was no street scene office report due to the elections.

#### **F77/2023. Police Report**

There were no police report.

#### **F78/2023. To confirm and sign the Minutes from the Full Council Meeting held on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**Ratified:** The minutes were approved and signed as a true record.

#### **F79/23. To appoint members to Committees and Working Parties.**

<b><u>Community Projects</u></b>	Cllr Mockett Cllr Gerstner Cllr Whitwell Cllr Dickinson Cllr Mayor Cllr Black
<b><u>Planning</u></b>	Cllr Whitwell Cllr Gerstner Cllr Nawaz Cllr Wainwright Cllr Dickinson Cllr Arman Cllr Black
<b><u>Finance &amp; Policy</u></b>	Cllr Boden Cllr Dorling Cllr Mockett Cllr Wicks Cllr Nawaz Cllr Sennitt Clough Cllr Arman

#### **WORKING PARTIES**

<b><u>Human Resources</u></b>	Cllr Gerstner Cllr Whitwell
<b><u>Website</u></b>	Cllr Laws Cllr Dickinson Cllr Arman

## **F80/23. To appoint members to Outside Bodies.**

This item will be discussed and agreed at the June meeting.

## **F81/2023 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.

Mr Alan Bessant presented the following to member.

Whittlesey 15 min Zone 20 Min Neighbourhood.

Another word for Localism – does we risk creating ghettos again? - The reason cities have been so historically socially transformative is precisely because they enable people to escape their 15-minute bubbles and aspire to better standards in better educated and more affluent areas.

Also, there is the simple fact that Agglomeration / clusters (think Silicon Valley/ silicon Fen) have been seen for years as the way forward to generate self-sustaining and ongoing economic prosperity. The NHS, for example, has centralised specialist treatment centres to reduce costs and leverage expertise. This does not fit with localism. The dream might be that the internet will close that gap. But this is being tested by a work force already trained in the old way. Much harder to bring on young workers who learned remotely and work remotely.

If 15-minute zone and 20 minutes neighbourhoods + Liveable neighbourhoods target a significant reduction in car use and an end for a need of private care ownership why did Mr Curtis vote to spend £250K on a bypass report (Growing Fenland Stakeholder team)?

The Government backed C40 Cities group and the legally binding Net zero target appears to be aiming for a 60% reduction in traffic in the next 20 -30 years. On that basis would that money have been better spent on improving local amenities and providing better public transport instead?

They used to be called 15-minute cities (note the name change). This is because most cities were built before the car and evolved from self-contained defensive citadels. They have grown to typically have enough jobs and services to meet most needs with some people only leaving them for leisure breaks. Still to meet the 15-minute rule for all needs is a challenge unless there is very strong public transport and exemplary health and educational services.

The 15-minute city concept is laudable - a world where walking would once again become our most common mode of transport. The idea is that everything a person needs (health care, education, entertainment, family, friends, employment, food, goods and services, parks, leisure, and sport centres) – all day-day needs should all be met within a 15-minute walk or cycle from any point in the area.

In practice those of us with contacts in major cities can see car usage and travel is often targeted well in advance of providing adequate amenities and does not take into account the public who already have family and work commitments which require travel. Also, large corporations such as Amazon and the Supermarkets and Wetherspoons often benefit at the expense of local retailers. Buy your carrots from Spain and your toys from Hong Kong and your German beer locally from our global corporation.

Long term with the 5G roll out another concern is a push to use online connectivity to supplement direct human contact. You can zoom your sick relative in Papworth so there is no need to visit – although the richest in society will no doubt still be able to afford travel. The NHS recently approved its first online treatment services for depression so hospital at home is a direction of travel.

The car restrictions are never put front and centre in the proposals but congestion charges, clean air zones, ultra-low emission zones, car bans and speed restrictions are typically rapidly implemented. The fact is if you make it hard for cars to come in, even with technology it makes it hard for residents to own cars and travel out – especially at peak times. There is also often a heavy reliance on monitoring and technology – big brother controlling your movements. In a national emergency the level of control the state would have is a concern – look at how the London Police operated during the Coronation for

example. The new powers in the Public Order Act have been described as dangerous, unnecessary, and illiberal by Liberal Democrat Caroline Pidgeon

Traffic restrictions around schools are another favourite target – but Sir Harry Smith is next to the A605 with HGVs thundering past – do we block that? At Park Lane major dusty recycling operations have been set up in Saxon Pit, 500m from the primary and infant school. The restoration of the Saxon Pit green belt is 15 years overdue. There is also even an air pollution monitor to check the situation from the Forterra Brickworks next to the school. Why is this allowed, and yet private car ownership and use is targeted as a priority?

Mr Windle – Advised members of the following events.

‘The Big Bash’ is coming Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June at Manor, at 13.55, weather permitting they will be a fly past by a Lancaster.

The Golden Age Fair is at the Manor on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June, this is free and provided by Fenland District Council

Mr Windle Town Council suggested the town council start their own social media site.

### **F82/2023 Agenda items for Discussion.**

1. Update of air quality monitor in Whittlesey – Cllr Boden advised the meters to have been installed, there is a page on FDC website giving data of the air quality, the intent is the future near real time will be able to display soon. The air quality in Whittlesey is below the scale, however it does not show what is going on with the spikes, residents need to be able to see the information on these spikes, more data will allow us to pinpoint where the spike is coming from. FDC also hoping to bring in data collected from other area so residents can view this. Diffusion tubes have been in place in Whittlesey for many years. We have expanded the NO2 diffusion tube measurement, the new measurement are individual measures for a short period of time, SO2 and particulates.

Cllr Wicks advised the noxious smell at Kings Dyke seems to emanate from McCains, and asked where the monitoring devices were located. Cllr Boden the additional monitoring is in the centre of Whittlesey, the majority of pollutants are coming from the West. The more data that is now received the more we can pinpoint the problematic area.

2. Rejection of “15 minutes city” and “20-minute neighbourhood” planning concepts in Whittlesey – Cllr Boden didn’t anticipate it would be relevant. On 31/5 CPCA will discuss and try to pass a resolution for a transport policy, within that there are some worrying proposals including congestion charging and road charging. All of which Mr Curtis mentioned are correct, there is nothing wrong with the concept, it is being hijacked by individuals who want to stop people using their cars, there is a war on motoring by individuals and this was discussed two to three decades ago so people could work and live nearby. The concept is known as low traffic neighbourhoods and is being hijacked to stop people using their cars. It may be right for Cambridge city but not for Whittlesey. Cllr Boden proposed a letter be sent to the Mayor of the CPCA once the paper has been revealed. Members voted in favour with one vote against. Cllr Boden will draft the letter.
3. Business Cards for Town Councillors – BNW – defer to F & P,
4. Coverage for WTC Offices - Cllr Mockett suggested that like many other councils the office is closed with a sign pointing people in the direction of their councillor. Cllr Gerstner suggested he and Cllr Whitwell discuss this with the Clerk.

## **F83/2023. To receive Councillor & outside body reports.**

Cllr Dorling presented the following to members 'Potential solution ideas.

School Streets are traffic management schemes implemented around schools to create a safer and more pedestrian-friendly environment during drop-off and pick-up times. The main objective of School Streets is to restrict motorised vehicle access and prioritise active modes of transportation such as walking and cycling. Here's how School Streets typically work:

1. Planning and Consultation: Engage with the school, parents, residents, and local community to build support and momentum for implementing a School Street scheme. Raise awareness about the benefits of reduced traffic, improved safety, and better air quality.

2. Make the Case: Involve children in activities that raise awareness about pollution, health, and active travel. Conduct surveys, data analysis, art projects, and campaigns to educate and engage students. Demonstrate the demand for active travel options and highlight the benefits of a School Street scheme.

3. Collaboration with Authorities: Connect with local authorities, such as School Travel Officers, Travel Planners, Safety Travel Officers, or Road Safety Officers, to discuss the possibility of implementing a School Street scheme. Explore the local authority's plans for walking and cycling and advocate for including School Streets.

4. Traffic Management Order: Local authorities can regulate traffic and restrict access under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. A traffic management order is applied to a street around the school, temporarily restricting motorised vehicle access during specified times (typically 30-45 minutes) on weekdays during term times.

5. Exemptions and Registration: Residents who live or work on School Street can register for exemptions from the temporary restrictions. Blue badge holders and those with temporary disabilities may also be exempt. The registration process is usually done online through the council's website. Consultation with residents is conducted before the scheme is implemented.

6. Enforcement: Enforcement of the temporary restriction can be done through retractable or collapsible bollards or Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras. School staff members can operate bollards, while ANPR cameras identify and penalise vehicles entering the zone without exemptions. The choice of enforcement method depends on the budget and specific circumstances of the street.

7. Signage and Notifications: DfT-compliant signs are installed at the entrance of School Street to inform drivers of the restrictions. Some signs may have flashing lights during the restricted period. Vehicles parked in the street before the restricted time can exit without penalties. Page 2 of 2

8. Evaluation and Decision: School Street schemes are typically introduced as Experimental Traffic Management Orders and evaluated over several months. The impact on motorised traffic reduction and the influence on surrounding streets are assessed. Based on the evaluation, a decision is made to make the scheme permanent through a Traffic Management Order or Traffic Regulation Order.

School Street schemes have shown positive results in reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality, and enhancing school safety. By prioritising active modes of transportation, School Streets promote healthier and more sustainable travel options for students and their families.

Cllr Boden advised this is not a new concept, a start has been made on a school in Cambs City who have a much larger problem than Whittlesey. We do have our own problems, Drybread Road and Park Lane, there are two ways of doing this as Cllr Dorling suggested, two options, two barriers, one at each end to prevent vehicles, the second way is using ANPR and having restrictions placed by CCC on road use at certain times of the day. We would have to rule out the A605 for traffic coming and going from Sir Harry Smith. New Road could be possible, but it would displace the traffic to other roads nearby, but at least this would not be outside the school gates. Civil parking enforcement could

work on Drybread Road, this would mean that WTC could direct where we need this carried out. Cllr Boden suggested this item be deferred to F & P for further investigation and alternatives and rule out things that are not possible.

Cllr Wicks Coates school held a scheme recently, Cllr Wicks does not have the information, but it may be worth looking at the model.

Cllr Laws – AJS – certain individuals park 1 hour before the school finishes and think they have the right to park there even though they only live 10 minutes away.

Cllr Laws – advised members that Middle Level navigation routes should now be clear. They have now put stages of process in place, and these will now go forward to court for unlicensed boats. The river Nene does not come under North Level, it falls under the EA and therefore she cannot do anything about this.

**F84/2023. To receive the minutes from the Finance & Policy Meeting on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

The Minutes were reported at Full Council in April. The next F & P meeting will be Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at 6pm.

**F85/2023 To report the financial documents.**

- To report the bank reconciliation to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023 – members received the reconciliation.
- To report the list of payments & uncashed payments – Vouchers 1 – 22 - £13504.95 proposed Cllr Boden, seconded Cllr Dorling unanimous vote in favour.
- To report the year-to-date figures (30<sup>th</sup> April 2023) – these were received
- Summer Reading Challenge Donation Request - £500.00 proposed Cllr Boden, seconded Cllr Dorling with a unanimous vote in favour.
- To agree the continued use of the General Power of Competence for the term of the council as the Clerk is CilCA qualified and the council are all elected members. This was proposed by Cllr Boden, Seconded Cllr Mayor with a unanimous vote in favour.

**F86/2023 – AGAR (Annual Governance & Accountability Return)**

The RFO must sign and date 'Section 2 – Accounting statements 2022/23 before it is presented to the authority.

- a. Consider and approve the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23 Part 3')
- b. Consider and approve the Accounting Statements (Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23 Part 3')
- c. Ensure the Accounting Statements are signed and dated by the person presiding at the meeting at which the approval is given.
- d. Internal Auditor report for information – The Audit report was reported.

**F87/2023. To receive the minutes from the Planning meeting on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

Ratified: The minutes from Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April were reported. The Clerk is away for the June meeting so will send out a doodle poll to hold a meeting end of May.

**F88/2023. To receive the minutes from the Community Projects meeting on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

Ratified: The minutes from Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April were reported. The Clerk is away for the June meeting so will send out a doodle poll to hold a meeting end of May.

**F89/2023. Consultations -** There were no consultations.

**F90/2023 Information only.**

There was no additional information.

**F91/2023 Invitations.**

There were no invitations.

**F92/2023. Date of next meeting –Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023**

**Meeting closed: 19:30**

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Cllr Mrs Kay Mayor  
Mayor of Whittlesey