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TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 19th March 2015

PRESENT

Councillors: Cllr M McDonald (Vice Chairman), A Chesters, B Duffy, J Ebbs, G Leverton, T Harris, T Neville, T O'Neill, J N Sinnott, T Slaton and B Slater

IN ATTENDANCE

M Wilson (Town Clerk), Cllr Gerald Dakin and Cllr Wynn.

1. Apologies

   Cllr R Hewson – Unwell
   Cllr L Stones – another commitment
   Cllr Rigley – another commitment

2. Declarations of Interest

   None.

3. Minutes

   Cllr McDonald reported an inaccuracy in that Cllr Harris was not at the meeting. After a proposal by Councillor Neville and seconded by Councillor O'Neill WTC/87/1415 RESOLVED to accept the minutes of the meeting.

4. Matters Arising

   None

5. Mayor's Announcements

   None

6. Outstanding Actions

   None

7. Public Participation

   Cllr McDonald requested items 11 and 12 be brought forward to the public session as there is a presentation from Shropshire Council concerning the skate park and questions would be asked. After a proposal by Councillor Chesters and seconded by Councillor Duffy
WTC/88/1415 RESOLVED to suspend standing orders for public participation and move items 11 and 12 to public participation.

One resident asked Cllr Dakin to respond to three questions

- The resident drew attention to the access road between the Bulls Head and Wright Marshall that leads to Tesco where there have been a number of close calls. He suggested that the road should be a no parking zone and asked what was being done about it. Cllr Chesters answered the question in that he understood that the land is leased to Tesco and they are aware and are dealing with the situation.

- Grocontinental Chamber 15: 12/04083/DIS

Directed to Cllr Dakin (Shropshire Council). Conditions set by the planning authority for the development of Grocontinental warehouses on land adjacent to the A525 included landscaping and screening to mitigate the visual impact. Screening has not been carried out and this area is being used for parking trailers and the omission of the acoustic barrier has yet to be addressed. The resident was handed a copy of the actions to comply with this condition. Cllr Dakin said that he had done some research prior to the meeting and gave a detailed report on actions taken to date.

- Grocontinental Chamber 18 13/03713/FUL

The resident complained that he had not received a satisfactory reason as to why Chamber 18 was built as a cold store, not a dry goods store as per the application. Cllr Dakin stated that he was happy with the officers answer to the complaint and he wanted it noted that he would not be answering any more emails on the subject. Cllr Sinnott informed the council that an enforcement notice had been placed on Grocontinental; Cllr Dakin agreed but said this was confidential information, to which Cllr Sinnott replied that he was not aware it was confidential.

Another resident asked Cllr Dakin for responses to questions as Grocontinental does not comply with planning decisions.

- The Aerobic digester (AD) has had four refusals from the environment agency and have had their application approved after the waste-food component was dropped and approval given for 6,000 tons of chicken manure and 19,000 tons of agricultural crop feed. She said that implication of this is that it is a costly means of producing 1 MW of electricity when the same amount could be produced with warehouse solar panels where consent has already been granted.

A question to Cllr Dakin as to whether any cost benefits has been completed on the anaerobic digester now that the waste-food feed element had been removed? Cllr Dakin replied that he was not on the management board of Grocontinental and therefore could not give a response.

The resident went on to say Cllr Dakin constantly informed residents that the AD was essential for the town as there is not enough electricity for the town and that business had left Whitchurch as it could not provide the electricity. At the planning meeting Cllr Dakin referred to this as a reason for the committee to approve the application. The resident challenged this stance quoting that the organisation in question moved to Wrexham as they wanted to expand and were offer favorable terms to move. Also other organisation and housing developments are moving to Whitchurch and if there wasn’t enough electricity then why have they opened in Whitchurch? The question to Cllr Dakin was to ask hand on heart that he stood by his stance there wasn’t enough electricity in
Whitchurch. Cllr Dakin repeated that he did not trust Scottish Power statement and hand on heart he believed there was not enough electricity in Whitchurch.

Cllr Harris disagreed stating there was enough electricity and Scottish Power had informed the Town Council it was prepared for the 500 houses being build, Cllr Leverson stated that the price of land will increase due to the change of waste products in the AD and could Cllr Dakin give a guarantee that the usage will not be changed as soon as they build the AD as it has already been demonstrated that the planning department make mistakes.

- A resident was keen to alert councillors present from Shropshire Council and Town Council that Grocontinental do not comply with planning requirements. They had complained to planning, their local Shropshire Councillor and Grocontinental and not had a reply from any; the only support they have received is from Whitchurch Town Councillor John Sinnott.

They live next to Grocontinental and they saw the dry goods warehouse being built which was changed to a refrigeration warehouse with all the noises that go with it. The refrigeration unit is presently switched off. Cllr Dakin stated that the residents had been written to and no one complained.

Cllr Sinnott reminded Cllr Dakin that the background noise levels before the warehouse was built cannot be tested as the building is already in situ. The resident complained of six years of light pollution, noise of the lorries and the refrigeration unit. It was bought to Cllr Dakin’s attention that screening trees had been chopped down when they should have been left.

Chair Cllr McDonald asked Cllr Sinnott to forward the complaints to Cllr Dakin.

- Cllr Paul Wynn Shropshire Councillor chairman of LJC gave the Town Council an update on Centre North East youth club stating the securing the building for another year; Whitchurch Town Councillor Tony Neville is also on the committee.

- A presentation from Shropshire Council representative Andrew Jones concerning the skate park to be built in Jubilee Park. Andrew Jones informed councillors that the area by the shed in the park has been investigated for the skate park; the existing shed would have to be carefully removed as it is over the gas mains and the water that has been gathering in the area could be channelled into a mains drain.

A resident asked if this was a Shropshire Council initiative and Andrew Jones explained that he worked for Shropshire Council, Cllr Dakin stated that the working party included the Town Council representatives who suggested the site for the skate park. The next step is to prepare a plan of the skate park and let the youth have a say, once the design is agreed then it would go to planning.

- Two young people from the Youth Council asked a question about the skate park; why has it taken so long. Cllr Dakin replied.

After a proposal by Councillor O’Neill and seconded by Councillor Leverton WTC/89/1415 RESOLVED go back into standing orders.

8. Presentation from Gerry Johnson

Not available will be attending next month.

9. Councillor Vacancy
After a proposal by Councillor Slater and seconded by Councillor Leverton WTC/90/1415
RESOLVED to Co-opt Thomas Salton onto the Town Council.

10. Report from Members on Outside Organisations.

- Cllr Slater reported attending the youth council meetings and making good progress.
- Cllr Neville reported attending the LJC meeting and had been voted to go on the working party to assist in the Centre North East youth project to find alternative premises for their youth club.
- Cllr Duffy attended the patients group AGM and they are trying to raise awareness of minor injury clinic, they have started a Facebook page.
- Cllr Harris attended AGM of the Waterways Trust, they bid for £500k lottery funds and were turned down. They did win £2,400 grant from another source. He also attended the Jane Higginson’s trust and reported that they are supporting the CAB with grants in the town and requested supporting the trust.
- Cllr O’Neill reported attending the Beechtree meeting and stated that grim times are ahead as their lottery funding has come to an end.

11. Skate Park

Discussed in item 7


Discussed in item 7

13. Travel expenses

A question was raised as to the Town Councillors receiving travel expenses for journeys outside of Whitchurch. Cllr Harris stated that this had been discussed before and Cllr Chesters agreed that this question is asked periodically. Cllr Harris reminded councillors they joined the Town Council and it would be at their own expense, travelling, printing etc. After a proposal by Councillor Chesters and seconded by Councillor Harris WTC/91/1415 RESOLVED no further action would be taken.

14. Craft Units rentals

Cllr Ebbs requested that the units be reviewed and a commercial rent is sought from the occupiers. The clerk confirmed that the leases had not been reviewed since 2010. Cllr Duffy stated that in the town businesses are looking for shorter leases and they may take up the units in the Heritage. It was agreed that the units should be reviewed and commercial rates and review the leases to the existing tenants. The clerk reminded councillors that one unit has Age UK which the town council is supporting. Cllr Ebbs suggested that this should be done through the grants rather than reduced rent prices. After a proposal by Councillor Chesters and seconded by Councillor Leverton WTC/92/1415 RESOLVED to review the rents in the Heritage Centre units through finance committee.

15. Discretionary rooms for not for profit organisations.

The clerk asked the council to give her the discretionary rights to offer reduced or free rates for the use of the Civic rooms for organisations not for profit. Currently all decisions are through the Full Council which could be too late for a decision and hence emails have been sent recently. This was discussed and a proposal that reduced rates should be offered first
and then any free use to be discussed with a councillor; Cllr Neville nominated himself. After a proposal by Councillor Chesters and seconded by Councillor Harris WTC/92/1415 RESOLVED that discretionary decisions can be made for reduced rates and Cllr Neville and the clerk will discuss free options.

16. Land at Edward German Drive

The clerk has visited the estate agent for some feedback and he suggested a reducing of £10k. After a proposal by Councillor Sinnott and seconded by Councillor Ebbs WTC/92/1415 RESOLVED to reduce the price of the land by £10k as recommended by the estate agent.

17. Visit to Stoke Heath Prison

The clerk reported a visit by Cllr Hewson, Neville and herself to Stoke Heath Prison. The prison is keen to be involved in the community and today visited the park and have agreed to paint the railings, the shed and the band stand. The men involved will be supervised at all times and the cost would be just materials. The prison has also offered three benches for the town and Cllr O’Neill agreed with the prison officer for these to be ornate benches; two can go in the park and one down London Road where the existing bench has deteriorated beyond repair. Councillors were keen to have this partnership. After a proposal by Councillor Chesters and seconded by Councillor O’Neill WTC/93/1415 RESOLVED to allow the prison service to assist in repairs around the town and pay for materials.

18. Blackberry Fair

The clerk asked for items 18 and 19 to be considered together and raised concern over the reduction in the precept which reduced the grants allocation. She reminded councillors that the Tourism Group were awarded £3k in 2013 to assist in town related expenditure and they asked the Town Council to keep the money and they would ask for it when it was needed. They have managed to secure a website for free and this was one of the areas of expense, they are now purchasing items to promote tourism in the town. This reduces the grant allocation considerably. The Blackberry Fair costs around £10k to put on and the Town Council provides £1.5k and staff time towards the event. The Blackberry fair committee would like continued support and to assist in recovering their expenditure they would like to use the theatre and charge for entry to listen to bands from 6 pm to 12 midnight. After a proposal by Councillor Chesters and seconded by Councillor Harris WTC/94/1415 RESOLVED to support the Blackberry fair and agree for them to use the theatre in the evening.


Cllr Chesters proposed that he and the clerk go through the budgets and try and find grant money from the 0.5% increase in the precept.

20. WW1

Cllr Ebbs reported that the cabinet in the foyer of the Civic is now ready to use and will be complete with WW1 items by Monday 23rd March. Cllr Ebbs is still trying to source a manikin and security around placing it in the hall. Tern Hill has been contacted but has not responded to date about an enactment.

21. Notice Board
Cllr Ebbs asked that any land owned by the Town Council could have a notice board to display events. It was agreed that the town centre manager should scope the area and to find any sites that have potential for a notice board.

22. Correspondence

- The clerk read out a letter from British Driving club inviting members to attend the Easter Monday parade outside Tesco’s on the 6th April.

- Invitation to the KSLI Memorial n Sunday 24th May at 11:00 am for the mayor to attend.

23. Harry Richards Accounts

After a proposal by Councillor Chester and seconded by Councillor Harris WTC/94/1415 RESOLVED to transfer funds to the CCLA account which is a safe account for the funds.

24. Statement of Accounts

Cllr Chester remarked on the fact the van was purchased for £2,800 when it was agreed to go up to £2,500. After a proposal by Councillor Chester and seconded by Councillor O’Neill WTC/94/1415 RESOLVED to accept the accounts for month 11.

25. Confidential Business

Meeting continued.


Meeting finished 9:10

Chairman ........................................... date 16/4/15