

MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 15 December 2014

At 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor J C Baker (Chairman)

Councillors:	A K Beames	H B Eaglestone
	B J Churchill	D S Enright
	M J C Curry	A D Harvey
	R F N Curry	C Holliday
	P J Dorward	J S King

Officers:	Town Clerk	Democratic Services Officer
	Facilities Supervisor	

Also present: Three members of the public and 1 member of the press.

563 **UPDATE ON FIRE SAFETY FROM THE FACILITIES SUPERVISOR**

The Facilities Supervisor was in attendance to update members on the procedure for evacuation of the Town Hall in the event of a fire. He also informed members that during the work to the Corn Exchange, the fire assembly point would be under the Buttercross.

The Facilities Supervisor left the meeting at 6.15pm.

564 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for their absence was received from Cllrs D A Snow, B J Woodruff and C K Woodward.

565 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

566 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October and the Extra Ordinary Meeting held on 26 November 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, with the following amendment to the minutes of 26 November 2014:-

Cllr P Dorward left the meeting at 6.20pm.

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2014.

567 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Rob Pratley - West Witney Sports and Social Club

Mr Pratley addressed the Council on behalf of West Witney Sports and Social Club. He said that the Club felt that the current situation was the responsibility of both the Council and the Club. He said that for a long time the Club had not had sight of the lease and therefore they had genuinely believed that maintenance issues were the responsibility of the Town Council, especially as things had been repaired by the Town Council in the past.

The Club had a new Health and Safety Officer and he had had a site visit with the Fire Officer. The upstairs function room had been closed due to the unsuitability of the spiral staircase as a fire escape. The Club had engaged via social networking to ask for help with the work required and the response had been overwhelming. However, financial support would be needed as well – to purchase raw materials in order to make repairs. He felt that this was a good opportunity for the Club and the Council to work together to ensure compliance.

The Club understood that there was a possibility that the insurance cover was now in doubt and they would engage with the Town Clerk to see where they stood.

If the club was closed there was nowhere to move to and the Club felt that there would be difficulties in renting out the facilities without changing rooms and toilet facilities. The Club had regrets that they had let things get to this stage but they wanted to keep the club as a going concern and to hand it over to West Witney Sports Association.

568 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

The Police were unable to attend the meeting but had passed on the December update which had been circulated to members for information.

The Town Clerk had circulated a Consultation from the District Council on a Public Space Protection Order – Proposed Closure of Footpaths, The Crofts and Highworth Place, Witney. A member commented that this alleyway was between the rear of the even numbered houses of The Crofts and Highworth Place. People living in this location suffered a lot of problems with anti-social behaviour on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. The proposal would block off the alleyway with locked gates.

Another member felt the proposal was a good idea and that it should be done as soon as possible. A member said that the NAG had been pressing this issue for a while.

RESOLVED: that the Council supports the Gating Order.

569 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received and considered a report of the Mayor's recent engagements.

The Mayor informed members that she had been working with some young men who wanted to organise a run in memory of Liberty Baker. They had some help from the running club and the District Council, but they were in need of some money up front. She asked members if the Council would consider giving them a grant.

In answer to a Members question the Mayor advised that the run was planned for early summer. That being the case the member suggested that an application for a grant might be better served at the start of the new fiscal year as the grant pot was currently depleted. The Mayor commented that without some financial help at the start the event would not happen.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £100 from the grant budget be awarded towards the event in memory of Liberty Baker.

570 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

a) Planning and Development Committee of 14 October, 4 November and 25 November 2014

A member commented that WODC had introduced a new planning system and he felt it would be beneficial if the Town Council would engage with it on this. The Town Clerk advised that a meeting had already taken place with the Officers and both Councils were trying to work together in order to introduce electronic planning.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Planning Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

b) Amenities Committee Minutes of 10 November 2014

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Amenities Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

c) Recreation Committee Minutes of 17 November 2014

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Recreation Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved with "Cricket Club" on page 2, minute R502, amended to read "bowls club".

A member referred to minute R509 and said that the field in question was no longer called Wood Green Field but Madley Park Playing Field.

d) Public Halls Committee Minutes of 24 November 2014

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Public Halls Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

e) Policy and Finance Committee Minutes of 1 December 2014

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

571 **RENEWAL OF FAIR TRADE STATUS**

The Council received and considered correspondence relating to the renewal of the town's Fair Trade Status. A member recalled that when the Council had previously signed up to the

agreement, it had been done so on the condition that there was no ongoing commitment to the Council. Another member noted that the other conditions had been on the proviso there were no financial implications to the Council.

RESOLVED: that the Council supports the renewals of the Fair Trade Status with the conditions that there was no ongoing commitment or financial implications to the Council.

572 **COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME**

The Council received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager on planned work.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

573 **VANDALISM REPORT**

The Council received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager. The Town Clerk updated members on a road traffic accident that had occurred on The Leys. Someone had been caught and the Council was seeking recompense for the damage.

A member asked if the press would be able to give some coverage of the vandalism in the Town and the Town Clerk confirmed that a press release was issued periodically. Another member was frustrated that despite crimes being reported, no action was taken. He asked that the police and the M.P for the Town were kept informed.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and that the vandalism is costed and brought back to the next meeting.

574 **HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE**

Members had been circulated with a "living document" on health and safety issues, to keep them informed.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

575 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

The members of the public and press left the meeting.

576 **SALE OF LANGDALE HALL**

The Council received a verbal update on the progress of the sale of the hall and the fact that exchange of contracts was imminent. She also updated Members on the application by the Witney Museum to register the hall as a community asset.

In response to a Members question on the exclusion the Mayor advised that at this point in the sale process there were legally sensitive issues involved and the sale was still subject to contract.

Another member asked if the purchasers were aware of the issue of registering the hall as a community asset and it was confirmed that they were.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk's verbal report be noted.

577 **WEST WITNEY SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB**

The Town Clerk updated members on the situation at West Witney Sports Ground. She had been in touch with the insurance company which had confirmed that the insurance would be void as there were professional reports that identified issues requiring rectification. She had asked for this to be confirmed in writing.

A member queried the Club's claim that it had not seen the lease. The Town Clerk felt that it was likely to have been mislaid with changes of personnel as the Club would have seen the extension of the lease in 1996 at the very least.

Members discussed how to proceed with the situation and the options open to the Council. A member stated that he did not think closing the club would be a good scenario. Another member said that the Club had already done some rectification work. Another member commented that although it was pleasing that the Club had had a good response from social networking, the work needed to be carried out properly.

A member queried what was happening with the expired lease and the Town Clerk explained that the Council had decided to hold over the lease with the original intention of moving the site elsewhere. The member asked if the Club could surrender the lease and the Town Clerk said that this was an option.

Other members expressed concern about the health and safety issues and it was felt that the Council had been generous in the timescales it had set out for rectification work. It was agreed that it had been a wakeup call for the Club.

RESOLVED:

1. that the Council serves a section 146 notice under the Law & Property Act 1925 setting out the health & safety/compliance issues and agrees to the rectification by no later than 30 January 2015 – or sooner if served notice by other authorities (Fire Officer for example)
2. that the outcome of resolution one above is reported by way of a full report to Council on 9 February 2015
3. that the Recreation Committee at its meeting on 12 January 2015 considers the officers options report on realistic long term solutions for the provision of a club house or alternative facilities to draw up an action plan to present to the West Witney Sports & Social Club. Taking into account of the increase in size of Witney in the coming years.

4. that the Recreation Committee be delegated to enter into discussions with the Club on the recommendations arising from resolution 3 and that a full report is brought back for consideration by Council on 9 February 2015.
5. that officers commission a structural survey on the club house with costings
6. that officers be requested to ascertain the capacity of the clubhouse as a matter of urgency given the partial closure of the facility
7. that H&S and full certification of all works be carried out at every step to ensure works are covered for every eventuality

None of the above resolutions extend the current lease or commit the Council to granting a new lease.

10 members voted in favour of the resolutions and 1 member abstained.

578 INCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC AND REVERT BACK TO OPEN SESSION

RESOLVED: that the Council returns to open session and that members of the press and public be invited to return to the meeting.

The Mayor informed the press and public that the Council had received a report on the Langdale Hall from the Town Clerk and further information would be released as soon as possible.

The Mayor explained that the Council had agreed to 7 resolutions regarding West Witney Sports and Social Club, and the Town Clerk read these out.

579 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

There were no documents to be sealed.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Chairman.