

MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 9 February 2015

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
	R F N Curry	C Holliday
	P J Dorward	T J Morris
	B J Woodruff	C K Woodward
	J S King	

Officers:	Town Clerk	Democratic Services Officer
	Facilities Manager	Responsible Finance Officer

Also present: Two members of the public

065 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for their absence was received from Cllrs M J C Curry and A D Harvey

066 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

067 **MINUTES**

a) **RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2014 and the Extra-Ordinary meetings held on 14 January 2015 and 2 February 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

b) **MATTERS ARISING:**

With reference to minute no. 033 from the EOC held on 14 January 2015, the Town Clerk updated Members on the meetings the Mayor, Cllr Roger Curry and she had attended with the District Council's CEO, David Neudegg, the Leader, Cllr Barry Norton, Cabinet Member, Cllr Richard Langridge and Head of Leisure & Tourism, Diana Shelton to discuss the situation with regard to the nomination of the Langdale Hall as an asset of community value. Consequently it was decided it was not appropriate to send the strongly worded letter as they were able to address the points verbally. With regard to the probable shortfall in funding the project as a result of the ACV, during the second meeting there was a suggestion that a loan on a preferential rate would be possible, subject to seeking cabinet approval in March.

With reference to minute no. 034 on the same minutes, the Town Clerk advised that an expression of interest had been received in respect of the provision of a tennis/café facility on the Leys Recreation Ground. This would therefore be referred back to the Recreation Committee for further consideration.

068 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Pratley, Treasurer of West Witney Sports and Social Club, was in attendance to update the Council on the work the Club had undertaken over the past couple of months in order to bring the building into compliance with legislation and the terms of the lease.

He wished to bring to the attention of Members the arrangement with regard to the electricity supply to the Council's Grounds Maintenance depot – it appeared to have been taking electric through a spur from the WWSSC supply and as a result they have been paying the bill. PHS had recommended that this supply be disconnected but the Club was trying to resolve the situation with the Council's Officers and was still being investigated by the Works Contracts Supervisor.

With regard to the fire risk assessment, Club Members, Derran Brown had taken responsibility for all H & S and had been working closely with the Fire Officer who had sent a copy of his letter to the Town Clerk, advising that he was satisfied that the actions taken to make the building safe and was happy with the action plan going forward.

All PAT testing had been completed. In respect of the legionella work, whilst not completed the Club was committed to undertake extensive plumbing work on site commencing on 23rd February. This would make the site very low risk and water maintained at correct temperature, the existing boiler then would be used for heating, so a sealed system. They had also acquired a legionella testing tag and scheduled for regular testing.

In summary he said that the Club had achieved an enormous amount of work in a very short space of time, but their biggest concern was, that now they had completed this work, would the Council keep giving them more and more obstacles till they reach a point where they fail. He said that they were just a group of like-minded people who felt really strongly about a community asset. To complete the plumbing work they have had to arrange funding. It would be unfair on them if they had to leverage finances further, if ultimately it resulted in the closing of the building. On a positive note the Town Clerk had forwarded the survey from Alder King showing that the building needs some TLC but the costs were not nearly as expensive.

The hard work of the committee had been acknowledged, along with Claire and the committee, they have enabled the place to remain open, and it showed support.

069 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

The Town Clerk informed the Council that unfortunately no one from the Neighbourhood Policing Team were able to attend to give an update.

070 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

The Chairman thanked all the Councillors who attended the exhibition on the Corn Exchange on the previous Friday and Saturday. She said it was well put on by the office team and she thought what Adam put together on the history of the Corn Exchange into a timeline was amazingly good. Both events were well received, and attended; on Saturday there was a steady stream of people who were a little more robust on their comments than those on the Friday evening. Overall both days were excellent.

071 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

- a) Planning and Development Committee of 16 December 2014, 6 January 2015 and 3 February 2015

With regard to the minutes of 16 December 2014, Cllr King pointed out that his name had been duplicated in the attendance. Cllr Roger Curry also pointed out that on page 3 second paragraph, what he actually said was “he was sure the planning committee would all vote against the proposal”, not what was quoted in the minutes.

RESOLVED: that, subject to the above amendments to the minutes of 16 December 2014, the minutes of the Planning & Development Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

- b) Amenities Committee Minutes of 5 January 2015

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

- c) Recreation Committee Minutes of 12 January 2015.

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

- d) Public Halls Minutes of 19 January 2015

A Member enquired whether the Town Clerk had any information on compensation with regard to the Town centre halls (Minute H041). The Town Clerk said that unfortunately as it was a local authority the legislation precluded the Council from applying for any compensation.

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

- e) Policy & Finance Minutes 2 February 2015

With regard to minute F055, a Member commented that he was getting bemused about lettings and leases; the Council were the Tenants on the Town Hall building and it is responsible for the roof and yet at West Witney Sports and Social Club the Council were the landlords and the Council was still responsible for the roof. He asked Officers to check about the different letting contracts so that the Council doesn't pay for things that it doesn't have to.

The Town Clerk said that the lease on the Town Hall building goes back to the eighties and was a 50 year lease; it was rented from the Town Hall Charity not on a commercial footing and the Council sub-let the shops below which generated an income to use to maintain the building. It was different to West Witney Sports and Social Club and solicitors have looked at the current leases - yes they are not on commercial footings but there is not much can be done at the moment.

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

072 **TOWN COUNCIL NOMINEES ON OTHER BODIES**

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda.

A Member pointed out that the two Town Hall Charity Trustees and two founder Corn Exchange Charity Trustees were all members of the WO Conservative Association and therefore part of a particular group in the Town. He thought it was important to have a mix. The Town Clerk said these were not political positions - the Town Hall Charity was not politically affiliated, it is just these were Town Council nominated representatives. The Clerk to the Trustees had recently pointed out that it was increasingly difficult when making decisions on the Town Hall having Town Councillors serving as Trustees, so that is why she had indicated that Mrs Knowles and Mrs Semaine were prepared to continue because of the conflict between the Town Council and their duties.

With regard to recommendation 2, a Member commented that the constitution of the new entity will allow the Council to nominate two Councillors; it would then be for the Trustees to agree who the other Trustees were, not for this Council. He would like this decision making to be delegated to the Public Halls Committee. The Town Clerk pointed out that Trustees and nominations to outside organisations were normally agreed at the Annual Council Meeting in May it would be for the Council to make sure they were two members of the serving Public Halls Committee rather than the Public Halls Committee deciding who those Trustees would be - this was the Council process.

RESOLVED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Council agrees to the continuation of Mrs Knowles and Mrs Semaine as Trustees on the Town Hall Charity;
3. that the Council appoints two Councillors (from the Public Halls Committee) as Trustees on the Corn Exchange Charity – and at the present time these be Cllrs Mrs J Baker and Mr R Curry.

073 **CIVIC EVENTS PROGRAMME 2015**

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda.

The Chairman said Armed Forces Day was a prime example of a clash as there was also a fun run through the town and an event on the Leys in memory of Liberty Baker on the same date. However all the AFD required from the Town Council was a little bit of administration and to put the flag up.

There was also a suggestion that a Freedom Parade be held this year. Originally it was thought this could coincide with Armed Forces day, however due to the clash, it was suggested it coincides with the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain. This would be led by RAF Brize Norton on official invitation from the Town Council to exercise its right.

RESOLVED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Council supports this years Armed Forces day by flying the official flag on the day from the Town Hall;
3. that the Town Clerk writes officially to RAF Brize Norton inviting them to exercise its right of the Freedom of the Town, to coincide with the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain on 13 September 2015.

074 **LEYS RECREATION GROUND TENDER – UPDATE**

The Council received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager as circulated with the agenda.

Due to circumstances in the previous recent weeks, it had not been possible to meet the original timescales of the tender process, so the tender deadline had been extended to the 23 February 2015. Given the revised time line and to stay on track, it was necessary for the Amenities Committee to be given delegated authority to confirm the contract rather than delay to the next Council, if in agreement. The Facilities Manager discussed the tender process in greater detail so that Members understood what was being asked and the implications.

RESOLVED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Amenities Committee be delegated authority to confirm the contract award of the splash park project in order not to delay the project;
3. that all Councillors are able to attend and participate fully at the Amenities Committee meeting if they so wish.

075 **WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND**

The Council received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager as circulated with the agenda.

The report detailed the current position and the resolutions that were reached by Council on 15 December 2014. The report of Alder King on the structural survey was also attached. The Facilities Manager highlighted the financial implications of the necessary works in the short term and up to 5 years. Members discussed the content and funding issues, and particularly the release of the S106 from the Curbridge housing development from which there was £250,000 pledged.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that about 18 months ago it was the desire for all leases at West Witney Sports Ground to run concurrently, and to renegotiate and run in line with West Witney Bowls Club lease which was due to expire in 2018.

The Alder King report suggested the Council's outlay was £60,000 and a Member asked where this was going to come from and over what period. The Town Clerk pointed out that

in order to pay for the Corn Exchange in the short term; some of the Recreation Earmarked Reserve had been used. She said once the council gets the Capital receipt from the sale of Langdale Hall the Earmarked Reserve would be replenished.

RESOLVED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Council agrees no further action is taken with regard to legal action on the lease and compliance;
3. that the Council endorses the recommendation from the Recreation Committee that a 3 year lease is negotiated with the WWS&SC tenants;
4. that the Council accepts the financial requirements on its part as Landlord in order for the lease to be granted;
5. that the report of Alder King is referred back to the Recreation Committee in order to draw up an action plan of works required;
6. that Officers continue to monitor the WWS&SCs compliance and carry out the required landlord inspections in a timely manner.

076 **HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE**

The report of the Facilities Manager as circulated with the agenda was received and considered. This included the recent electrical fire in the Town Hall which had been classified as two near misses.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

077 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no documents to be sealed.

Note Minute No's 078-081 not used

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.
