

MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 5 October 2016

At 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor C Holliday (Chairman)

Councillors: A K Beames H B Eaglestone
C Brown D S T Enright
H W Chirgwin A D Harvey
B J Churchill L M Price
 C E Reynolds
 C K Woodward

Officers: Town Clerk Responsible Financial Officer
 Democratic Services Officer

Also present: 2 Members of Thames Valley Police
1 member of the public

560 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs Bartington, Doughty, and Temple

561 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllrs Churchill and Woodward declared non-pecuniary interests as they were a Trustee of the Corn Exchange Witney Trust.

562 **MINUTES**

a) RESOLVED: to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2016 and the Extraordinary minutes of the meeting held on 18 August 2016 for signature by the Chairman.

b) MATTERS ARISING

3 August 2016 – page 2 – minute no. 438 – the Leader commented that a £500 grant was available for the river clean up as a joint project if the police were interested; page 7 – Cllr Woodward wished it to be noted that he had abstained from the vote.

18 August 2016 – page 1 – a member asked if there was an update on the Grounds Maintenance Contract. The Town Clerk replied that the contract had started and everything seemed to be going well. There were a few things to be ironed out in the contract but nothing major.

563 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The member of the public present did not wish to address the council.

564 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

Chief Inspector Julian Collinson was in attendance with PC Chris Cochrane. C.I Collinson thanked the Council for the invitation. He covered Cherwell and West Oxfordshire. He had chosen to present some crime data to the Council, with data covering West Oxfordshire as a whole and Witney as a town.

Crime in West Oxfordshire was down by 5% and in Witney down by 18%; burglary dwelling in West Oxfordshire was up 49% and in Witney up by 19%; violence against the person was down in West Oxfordshire by 19% and in Witney down 18%; sexual offenses in West Oxfordshire were down by 21% and in Witney down by 18%; drugs offences were up by 31% and 55% in Witney and criminal damage was down by 7% and in Witney down by 19%. The figures were for the financial year to date.

A member asked about levels of anti-social behaviour. Chief Inspector Collinson explained that this sat below criminal behaviour but he acknowledged that it had a big impact on society. The police did deal with this in the same way as a crime.

A member enquired if crimes were broken down into different times of day as it would be useful to know when they were happening to target resources more effectively. The Chief Inspector replied that he did not have the information to hand but the police did have access to this as it helped the government to divert resources accordingly.

Another member asked if the drugs offences were dealing or using. It was explained that any case in which a person was in possession of drugs was included. The member said that he had been told that drugs were being dealt in his locality. The police were aware of this. Another member had been told there were drugs being sold at West Witney Sports Ground.

A member asked how many of the crimes had had convictions. Chief Inspector Collinson said that it was difficult to explain fully as convictions could be penalty notices, fines, cautions or imprisonment.

A member congratulated the police on their hard work but asked what action was being taken on cyclists on pavements. This was a dangerous problem. The police promised to take this back to the station to look into.

A member had queried what had happened about the incident where a car had mounted the pavement and had almost run someone over. PC Cochrane replied that this had not been allocated to the neighbourhood team to deal with.

565 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES**

a) PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - 2 AUGUST, 23 AUGUST AND 13 SEPTEMBER 2016

The Chairman of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance. Cllr Brown asked that it be noted that he was a substitute for Cllr King at the meeting of 13 September.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Planning and Development Committee of 2 August, 23 August and 13 September 2016 as detailed be received and any recommendations therein approved.

b) PUBLIC HALLS SUB COMMITTEE – 5 SEPTEMBER 2016

The Chairman of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Public Halls Committee of 5 September 2016 as detailed be received and any recommendations therein approved.

c) AMENITIES COMMITTEE – 12 SEPTEMBER 2016

The Chairman of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

A member informed the Council that as an update to the Oxlease project, the group had applied to the Tesco Groundwork Grant. Voting would be taking place in store between October and November.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Public Halls Committee of 5 September 2016 as detailed be received and any recommendations therein approved.

d) COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 19 SEPTEMBER 2016

The Chairman of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

The Clerk asked that members ensured that a site visit was made to the land at Thorney Leys before the next meeting. The Chairman agreed to organise this.

A member reported that the campaign to support Deer park Medical centre was going well. She asked if the Council would agree to have a public meeting for the public to attend. Another member thought a Town Council public meeting would be a very good idea. The issue had been discussed at WODC and there were not enough vacancies at the other surgeries for the displaced patients. A member commented that the next County Council Health Overview Scrutiny Committee meeting would be in November and this would be discussed there. She added that a similar situation had happened in Bicester and it therefore might be worth making links with them. The suggested date for the public meeting was 26 October to be held in the Corn Exchange. All members were supportive of this.

The Town Clerk drew members' attention to the subject of bus provision. The Council had been informed that Go Ride would no longer be able to continue after November.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the minutes of the Community Services Committee of 19 September 2016 as detailed be received and any recommendations therein approved.
- 2) that a public meeting be held by the Town Council on 26 October 2016 in the Corn Exchange.

e) COMMUNICATIONS SUB COMMITTEE – 12 SEPTEMBER 2016

The Chairman of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Communications Sub-Committee 2016 as detailed be received and any recommendations therein approved.

f) CHRISTMAS LIGHTS WORKING PARTY – 3 OCTOBER 2016

The Chairman of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

The Town Clerk reminded members that all councillors should be fundraising for the Christmas Lights.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Christmas Lights Working Party 2016 as detailed be received and any recommendations therein approved.

g) POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 26 SEPTEMBER 2016

The Chairman of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee 2016 as detailed be received and any recommendations therein approved.

h) CONSULTATION WORKING PARTY – 26 SEPTEMBER 2016

The Chairman of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Consultation Working Party 2016 as detailed be received and any recommendations therein approved.

566 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received and considered a report of events attended by the Mayor and his Deputy.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

567 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader had two items for the Council's attention.

- An offer had been received from OCC to attend a consultation on the A40 bus/Park and Ride (Eynsham) Scheme. Cllr Bartington had attended and had reported that the thinking behind the project did not seem to be joined up and was not taking into account the amount of growth in the area. Furthermore, the possibility of linking Eynsham Park and Ride with Long Hanborough Station was not being considered.

- The Leader had received an invitation to meet Mr Wilson of Bob Wilson & Son Funfairs during Witney Feast. He had concerns that there were more than 2 fairs at The Leys this year. The Leader had assured him that the other fairs did not accrue rights. Mr Wilson cautioned that the Council should not lose sight of the special nature of the fair. The Town got extra special rides at the fair because it was Witney Feast. The trade stalls had not come to the feast this year because there were other fairs happening, making the Feast less special.

A member commented that in his opinion a fair was not a service provided but a money making enterprise. However, he agreed that the Council should remain on good terms with the Wilsons.

The Town Clerk informed the Council that this would be discussed further at the next Community Services Committee.

RESOLVED: that the communication from the Leader be noted.

568 **ELECTIONS TO NALC LARGER COUNCILS COMMITTEE 2017/18**

The Town Council received and considered information pertaining to standing for election to NALC as circulated with the agenda. The Town Clerk explained that Witney Town Council was now classed as a Super Council due to certain criterion. She asked that any members interested should let her know.

RESOLVED: that the information be noted.

569 **CONCLUSION OF AUDIT FOR 31 MARCH 2016 REPORT**

The Council received and considered the report of the External auditor for 31 March 2016 as circulated with the agenda.

There was some discussion about the earmarked reserve set aside for allotments. The Town Clerk would speak to the District Council to ensure the money was secure.

RESOLVED: that the Council note and approve the report of the External Auditor as circulated.

570 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no questions to the Leader.

571 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no documents for sealing.

572 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions 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.

Cllr Churchill left the room as she was a member of the CEWT.

573 **CORN EXCHANGE**

The Council received and considered a confidential report from the Town Clerk, the RFO and a confidential verbal update from the Leader of the Council on the meeting with the Corn Exchange Witney Trust on 27 July 2016.

Cllr Morris said that the time had now come for the Town Council to start running the building. Cllr Harvey thanked all those who had put time and effort into trying to make it work. He agreed with Cllr Morris that the Town Council should now run the Corn Exchange for the people of Witney. He proposed the recommendations of the Town Clerk's report which were seconded by Cllr Beames.

Cllr Enright wanted to know what the sticking points were before he could vote.

Cllr Morris explained the issues as highlighted at the Policy and Resources Committee of 26 September 2016. Cllr Enright replied that none of those items mentioned were killer issues. He asked if relationships had broken down to such a degree that no further negotiations were possible.

Cllr Morris replied that they were not killer issues in his opinion but the Trust had indicated that they were deal breakers. He was very clear that the Council was not severing links with the trust or any trust. It could be that some of the trustees didn't want to work with the council.

Cllr Harvey commented that the issue had been discussed at length at the Policy and Resources Committee. The Council had given ground all the way and had gone against legal advice to do so. It was a sad situation but the Council needed to take positive action. He added that the Trust had found that the funding streams were not as secure as they had thought.

The Mayor invited members to vote on the recommendations as proposed and seconded.

All members noted the report.

Recommendations 2, 3 and 4 – 9 members voted for the recommendations as proposed Cllr Woodward abstained.

RESOLVED:

1. that the RFO's confidential report be noted;
2. that due to on-going delays the Public Halls Committee reconvene to put together a plan to run the Corn Exchange;

3. that the Council writes to the Trust, to say that given recent correspondence it appears that the Council and Trust are some way off reaching an agreement and the Council has no option but to run the Corn Exchange itself until such time that a Trust may come forward with a proposal to run it;
4. that after the Trust is written to as a matter of courtesy, a press release is issued on the Friday of that week.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Chairman.