

Minutes of the meeting of WATTON TOWN COUNCIL held on

Tuesday 22nd March 2016 at 7.00 pm

at Wayland Hall, Middle Street, Watton, Norfolk IP25 6AG in the Council Chamber

Councillors Present: Ken Birch Chairman, Beryl Bunning – Vice-Chairman, Peter Bishop, Daniel Fishlock, Jennie Fishlock, Keith Gilbert, Stan Hebborn, Margaret Holmes, John Rogers, Maureen Roy.

County Councillor Claire Bowes

Officers Present: Jane Scarrott Town Clerk, Michelle Craigie Administration Assistant

Eastern Daily Press reporter also in attendance.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Sue Hebborn.

It was noted that Kevin Abbott has resigned as a Councillor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS MADE

Daniel and Jennie Fishlock declared interest in item 8.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES 08.03.16

The minutes of the meeting held on March 8th 2016 were unanimously agreed as a true record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

4. REPORTS

4.1 Chairman's Report

The Chairman has attended the following:

18th March – Norfolk County Council Chairman's reception

20th March – Youth Centre Litter Pick

21st March – Trip from Linden Court to Thetford

The Chairman has made enquiries relating to a value for the Town Minibus. £4000 has been suggested for a private sale.

4.2 Vice-Chairman's Report

The Vice-Chairman has attended the following:

17th March UEA talk on childhood in Watton

20th March – Youth Centre Litter Pick

The Vice-Chairman gave an update regarding plans for the celebration for the Queen's 90th Birthday to be held on April 24th 2016.

4.3 Police Report

No Police present. Apologies received.

4.4 County Councillor Report

The County Council has been able to reverse budget proposals which would have seen the closure of some fire stations, libraries and reduced hours at recycling centres. This will mean Ashill Recycling Centre opening hours will remain as they are at present. SAM2 provision for Watton is included in the £380,000 funding for 122 small scale highway projects across Norfolk which has been approved by Councillors.

4.5 District Councillor Report

It was noted that Michael Wassell has stepped down as the leader of Breckland Council. His successor will be appointed at the end of the month.

Keith Gilbert attended the planning appeal hearing on March 8th relating to a residential development of up to 180 dwellings at land at Thetford Road, Watton.

The hearing was felt to be fair in that people were given good opportunity to voice their comments.

4.6 Clerk's Report

A copy of the written report presented is filed.

Verbal update given:

- A request has been made for the Mayor to support a petition against cuts to funding for local pharmacies. It was unanimously agreed (with one abstention) the Mayor is able to do this personally but should not do so in his official capacity as Mayor as the Council does not wish to be political.
- E-mails have been passed to Councillors regarding future electronic planning consultations and giving notice of a planning consultation relating to the Housing and Planning Bill currently at the Committee Stage in the House of Lords.
- Interim Internal Audit Report forwarded to Councillors.
- It was requested a matter relating to Richmond Golf Club be discussed further following a resolution to exclude the public and press.

5. ***PUBLIC PARTICIPATION***

No members of the public were present.

6. **ACCOUNTS**

6.1 Payments for March

All agreed approval of payments for March as presented.

6.2 Solicitor's costs to extend length of lease of land at Thetford Road

Confirmation has been requested that that the Town Council will pay the landlord's solicitors costs of £1000 plus VAT for the length of time of the lease of the Thetford Road allotment land to be extended. £1200 is to be held on account by Ward Gethin Archer. Estimated additional costs for legal fees will amount to possibly another £850 plus VAT.

Fees unanimously accepted.

Comment was made that the Council should adopt a best value approach when seeking any further legal assistance, as with engaging any other service or contractor.

6.3 Allotment Fees

The Interim Internal Audit Report includes a recommendation that allotment fees be reviewed annually. Currently fees are £17.45 p.a. for an allotment.

It was agreed with one vote against to raise the fee to £17.50 for 2016/17 and to £20.00 in 2017.

6.4 Storage in the Clock Tower

Interest declared by Richard Crabtree as a member of the Rotary Club which uses the Clock tower for storage.

A decision is needed as to whether storage should be permitted in the base of the Clock Tower once again providing a favourable structural report of the building is received. Use of the building for storage will probably mean the current rate demand will continue (under review but unlikely to be a nil demand).

It was agreed with two abstentions (Ken Birch and John Rogers) that the present storage use continues and rates are paid.

7. REFURBISHMENT OF FLOWER CONTAINERS

This agenda item will be passed to the next Town Council meeting as no response has yet been received from the Community Rehabilitation Team approached to possibly undertake the work.

8. GRANT APPLICATION FOR ST. MARY'S CHURCH OUTREACH PROJECT

Interest declared by Stan Hebborn.

All those who did not declare an interest voted in favour of a grant of £480 to be given as requested.

9. PLANNING NOTIFICATIONS

9.1 Application for consideration:

3PL/2016/00264/F Change of use of 2 dwellings to office space with associated landscaping at 126 Brandon Road.

No objections raised

Notification has been received that a planning appeal hearing will take place on April 6th at Watton Sports & Social Centre relating to residential development of 73 dwellings on land west of Saham Road, Watton APP/F2605/W/15/3140922

It was noted Peter Bishop would be attending the meeting and would voice the comments from the Town Council on behalf of the Town Council.

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC – In view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, concerning staff and contracts, a resolution was passed to exclude the Public and Press at this point.

The Mayor has made enquiries relating to the amount of money given by Breckland Council to the Town Council when the public toilets were handed over to the Town Council. This matter will be an agenda item for a future meeting and it was suggested an accountant should be engaged to clarify how the money was allocated and spent.

Following information received from Breckland Council further enquiries will be made relating to land leased to Richmond Golf Course.

10.1 Staff Contracts

Discussion took place relating to the review of staff contracts and it was agreed the decision made at the meeting held on March 8th regarding payment of overtime should be revisited as the Council has been made aware of further information. It was agreed by all that this matter will be passed to the HR Working Group for investigation before it is again a Full Council agenda item.

10.2 Matters relating to Watton Cemetery

Matters relating to the administration of the Cemetery will be a future agenda item to allow Councillors to read the report submitted by the Administration Assistant following her attendance at a Cemetery Management Course.