

Minutes of the virtual meeting of WATTON TOWN COUNCIL held on

Tuesday October 13<sup>th</sup> 2020 at 7.00pm

Councillors Present: Pat Warwick - Chairman, Peter Bishop, Beryl Bunning, John Chocqueel-Mangan, Jane Fountain, Keith Gilbert, Stan Hebborn, Sue Hebborn, Richard Hindley, Don Saunders, Kathryn Stallard, Les Waller.

Officers present: Jane Scarrott Town Clerk and Michelle Thompson Deputy Clerk.

District/County Councillor Claire Bowes also present.

Prior to the start of the meeting a one minute silence was held in memory of former Mayor John Rogers.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED FROM**

Tina Kiddell

2. **NO DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST MADE**

3. **MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020 were accepted as a true record. The minutes will be physically signed by the Chairman as soon as possible.

4. **REPORTS**

4.1 Address from Sam Chapman-Allen, Leader of Breckland District Council (BDC)

Sam had been invited to attend the Town Council meeting to update on how BDC is looking to support the 5 market towns in the district.

Points made:

- Tough days may still be ahead as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and there is a need for all to work together to help the High Streets survive.
- BDC has supported the economy through its Confidence Campaign and is talking to businesses about their issues and needs.
- As requested Watton Town Council submitted a 'wish list' of works it would like to see undertaken around the town. BDC wants to support Watton moving forward and will be looking to help prioritise items on the list.
- £50000 is available in each Breckland Market Town for each of the next three years to be used for capital investment to create greater security for the High Streets.
- The challenge is to take sustainable activities from the lists presented by the five towns and look at how funding might be allocated and where other money might be obtained from.
- BDC is investigating the provision of cycle lanes and digital street signs in the Market Towns.
- Long term outcomes are needed for the whole of Watton and better relationships and more partnership working will be necessary between organisations.
- Heritage maps for Watton could be linked to Market Town Initiative funding and the provision of electronic signage. The Town Council's wish list will need to be prioritised with delivery of projects starting in early 2021.

- Watton Sports Centre needs to be made viable and there is commitment from BDC to assist with this and work with others to provide leisure facilities, but the Sports Centre cannot be directly supported by BDC.
- Noted that charities within the town have often had to take on provision of facilities when none have been provided, but these charities are private and independent and their assets and estates are not within public control.

#### 4.2 Chairman's Report

The Chairman has attended:

- Virtual meetings with Simon Wood Head of Planning at BDC and Rob Walker, Breckland District Council Executive Director of Place. Report included within agenda pack relating to the meeting with Simon and verbal update of the meeting with Rob will be given under item 14.2.
- Virtual BDC Market Towns Meeting attended by Chairman and Deputy Chairman on 29.09.20.
- The Mayor has been in touch with new local resident Natasha Cockram, British Champion at the 2020 London Marathon, to congratulate her on behalf of the Town Council.

#### 4.3 Vice-Chairman's Report

The Vice-Chairman has attended the Market Towns virtual meeting as above.

#### 4.4 Clerk's Report

##### **Reports e-mailed to Councillors 02.10.20:**

1. Barratts Update – Thetford Road development
2. Drainage Report as given by Liz Witcher 22.09.20
3. Notes from the meeting led by Sam Chapman-Allen (SCA) 29.09.20 and attended by the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Clerk
4. Notes from the meeting held with Simon Wood 30.09.20, plus a copy of the s106 agreement relating to the Officer's Mess Site

Since the Market Towns meeting on 29.09.20 there has been further communication from Officers at BDC who have confirmed that the wish list submitted to BDC by the Town Council is being considered. BDC is looking at how Market Town Initiative money could be used to help provide items on the list and whether funding might be obtained from elsewhere for some projects. BDC is to consolidate the list which will then be shared back with the TC.

##### **Updates from meeting held 22.09.20**

- New play equipment at Bridle Road has now been handed over to the Town Council and it is suggested a photo shoot of an official opening with the Mayor, the Clerk and a representative from HAGS is now arranged before half-term.
- It has been confirmed by BDC that the area beneath the willow tree on the St. Giles Road car park is owned by BDC. The rubbish left in this area has now been cleared on instruction from BDC.
- The Cemetery Working Group is scheduled to meet prior to the next Town Council meeting: 6.30pm on Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>.

## **2019-20 Audit**

The Watton Town Council 2019-20 Audit has been completed with no matters raised. Notification has been posted on the TC website and notice boards.

## **Thetford Road Allotments**

Payment has been made to AngliaWater for the proposed water connection at the Thetford Road Allotments, but no date has been given as to when the work will be undertaken.

The hole cut through the fence from Jubilee Garden to the allotments is being blocked by pallets. A quote will be obtained for a gate to be erected.

## **5. FINANCE**

The draft minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on September 25<sup>th</sup> were noted with the following recommendations agreed:

- I. The Council will consider commissioning an audit of energy use in all Council premises with a view to improving energy efficiency and reducing the Council's carbon footprint.
- II. At this time, the Town Council will not donate any further funding to Watton Sports Association.
- III. The Town Council will provide a .gov e-mail address for the Town Operative and the Market Supervisor.

## **6. ANNUAL PLAY AREA INSPECTIONS 2020**

**It was agreed** that all work identified as necessary at the Annual Play Equipment Inspection will be commissioned.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Risk Management Plan was reviewed with no amendments to be made.

## **8. S106 OFFICER'S MESS SITE**

The Chairman and Clerk have met with Simon Wood, Head of Planning at BDC to discuss the s106 Agreement dated 18.08.2017.

Points raised:

- BDC no longer taking on any land therefore would want Watton (or possibly a residents management company) to adopt the land.
- Contribution of £121000 is associated with the open space land and not the Alternative Community Land (ALC) so there is concern how the cost to manage the land will be met.
- A variation of the 106 agreement could be made to allow the financial contribution to be used to maintain the whole of the area not just the open space land
- There remains concern relating to maintenance of the trees on the land and what condition the land be in when handed over
- What is the land be used for and what would the maintenance regime need to be?
- No specification yet for the Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)
- Will the track across the ALC be adopted by Highways?

A site meeting has followed the virtual meeting and the Town Council is now waiting to hear back from BDC.

## 9. **BIKE RACKS**

Breckland District Council has offered to install two bike racks in Watton High Street and has asked for suggestions for locations.

The car park at the Youth & Community Centre has been put forward as a location but this may not be considered as being within the High Street area.

Although the Town Council is keen to accept the bike racks, no decision regarding any other location was made.

## 10. **PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO)**

**It was agreed that** the Town Council would like to see the current Watton PSPO, which is due to expire, renewed as it stands.

## 11. **PARKING AROUND WESTFIELD INFANT SCHOOL**

Discussion took place around parking problems outside Westfield Infant School and the speed of vehicles along Merton Road past Wayland Academy.

Issues around speeding vehicles around Westfields have previously been identified and speed restrictions were put in place, but it is now parking which is causing more concern.

County Councillor Claire Bowes will request that Parking Operations focus on the area and she will also arrange to meet with the Highway Engineer for the area and the Head of Westfield School.

It was noted that the Norfolk County Council Parish Partnership Scheme could help fund a 20mph speed limit outside the Academy should a local campaign bring this matter forward.

## 12. **GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHEME**

If a Good Neighbourhood Scheme were to be established in Watton it would be an independent scheme which the Town Council would be willing to support and be involved with and thus it would be useful for the Council to nominate a Councillor to liaise with the group and report back to the Town Council. Once more is known about what this might entail, it will be an agenda item again at the next Town Council meeting to nominate a representative.

## 13. **PLANNING**

Noted that, as a member of Breckland District Planning Committee Keith Gilbert made no comment on the application consultation at the Town Council meeting.

13.1 3PL/2020/1048/F - Relocation of cantilevered yard racking. - Jewson Builders Merchant, Norwich Road Industrial Estate Watton IP256DF

The Town Council is sympathetic to the concerns of residential neighbours regarding noise generation from the site and is pleased that officers and the site operator have managed to negotiate a more suitable location for the racks to be erected within the site. Given that the operator is a long standing occupier of the site with a good record of community relations, it was felt that if neighbouring residents concerns remain relating to valid planning reasons these might be resolved by agreed working practices that could be supported by a conditional permission if required.

Jane Fountain will compile comments to be submitted.

## 14. **Resolution passed to exclude the public and press to consider staffing matters.**

Watton Sports Association/Charities Update

There have been meetings and much talk of a Regeneration Plan for Watton but no plan has materialised and any thoughts of organisations amalgamating has not progressed.

Charities in the town have met and those at the meeting had no appetite to join together but would be willing to work co-operatively. It is felt the charities have assets but they are private bodies and thus do not hold public assets.

The Chairman and Clerk have met with Rob Walker, BDC Director of Place, who remains keen to assist Watton moving forward but the town needs to put aspirations together. It has been suggested partnership working could be helpful in obtaining more beneficial outcomes for the town and the charities.

After much debate it was agreed that the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Clerk would meet with Neil Featherstone and David Dent to look at how aspirations for the town, many of which have been formulated within the Watton Neighbourhood Plan, could be incorporated into a draft for a Town Plan. Outcomes from the meeting could then be considered at a Town Council Meeting where the Town Plan would be the only item on the agenda.