

Minutes of the virtual meeting of WATTON TOWN COUNCIL held on

Tuesday November 24th 2020 at 7.00pm

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

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

District/County Councillor Claire Bowes also present and 2 members of the public.

1. **NO APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED**

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST MADE**

Stan Hebborn and Pat Warwick declared an interest in item 5.1 as both are listed to receive expenses payments and Tina Kiddell declared an interest in item 9.1.

3. **MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2020 were accepted as a true record. The minutes will be physically signed by the Chairman as soon as possible.

4. **REPORTS**

4.1 Chairman's Report

Thanks were voiced for John, Beryl and Mark Bunning who have given time to convert the Town Council trailer into a sleigh for Santa. Jewsons are also to be thanked for contributing materials for the project.

It was agreed that publicity for "Santa Coming to Town" will mainly be via social media, but the PEPSO will be asked to design and purchase a banner to advertise what is planned.

4.2 Vice-Chairman's Report

The Vice-Chairman has taken part, with other Councillors, in the virtual meeting on November 16th when the Council received a presentation from Locality and the Watton and Swaffham Annual Partnership Working Meeting on the 19th.

4.3 District Councillors Report

Neither Tina Kiddell nor Keith Gilbert had anything to report but it was noted the Town Council receives a weekly update from Sam Chapman-Allen, Leader of Breckland District Council.

4.4 County Councillors Report

Updates from Claire Bowes:

- Cranswick County Foods - The majority of factory staff have completed self-isolation and returned to work. Further results have been received from the remaining staff tests – with a low rate of positives – so a small number are self-isolating. Final test results due w/b 23.11.20. Outbreak will be closed 28 days from the last positive test received. Factory continues to operate but with reduced capacity in some areas still (mostly retail).
- Breckland District Council (BDC), Norfolk County Council (NCC) and the Police are keeping a watchful eye for any rough sleepers in Watton who will be offered assistance.
- NCC has packages of support in place for vulnerable residents with details of schemes to be released.

- Plans are in place to begin works for a new footway from Redhill Park to Footpath No. 8 (Church Walk).
- A Traffic Regulation Order to extend the speed limit along Norwich Road should be in place by Spring 2021, the cost having been supported through the members allowance for Highway schemes.

4.5 Police Report

No Police attending the meeting but regular newsletters and other e-mail updates are received and passed to Councillors. Councillors have been invited to register interest in becoming members of Safer Neighbourhood Action Panel (SNAP) virtual meetings. Les Waller and Pat Warwick have responded.

4.6 Clerk's Report

Copy of the written report included within the agenda pack is filed.

Verbal update given at meeting:

- BDC is looking to contribute to planting and replacement of some street furniture in Watton High Street. Once an "official" offer has been received it will be presented to Councillors.
- The guttering at Wayland Hall has been cleared which will hopefully help alleviate dampness that had been experienced recently within the building.
- The Christmas books which have been purchased to be given to Watton children have been delivered and will be distributed to Councillors for wrapping.
- A further meeting is scheduled with Simon Wood BDC Director of Planning and Building Control to consider issues relating to the RAF Radar Site development.
- It was noted that, as in previous years, the Town Council Office will be closed over the Christmas period from December 24th to January 4th.

It was noted by a member of the public that the minutes from the Town Council meetings have not been posted on the TC website since August. This has been a result of a need to ensure documents for the website are produced in a format that meets the new accessibility criteria, but it is expected minutes will now be added to the website in the next few days.

5. **FINANCE**

5.1 Payments for November were approved for payment as presented.

5.2 The draft minutes from the Finance Committee meeting held on 12.11.20 were received. The meeting had considered an initial proposal for the 2021/22 Budget. The Finance Committee has strived to present a budget for 2021/22 which will result in only a small increase (less than 2%) in the precept request and it is expected this will actually result in a reduction in what residents pay towards the Watton contribution of their Council Tax.

The Chairman of the Finance Committee verbally outlined the rationale for the proposal. Further work will be carried out by the Finance Committee at the meeting on 27th November prior to bringing a recommendation for the Budget and the precept request to the next Full Council Meeting. Councillors were asked to make any further comments before 27th November.

6. **CEMETERY**

6.1 The notes from the Cemetery Working Group meeting held on 27.10.20 were accepted.

6.2 It was agreed that, due to lack of space, no additional trees will be planted in Watton Cemetery without the express permission of the Town Council.

However, it will be accepted policy that any trees lost or felled on Town Council owned land will be replaced, but not necessarily in the same location.

7. **STEVENS ALMHOUSES**

The Town Council had been notified (and would raise no objection) that the Trustees of the Stevens Almshouses Charity are to remove the Charity from the Register of Social Housing Providers.

8. **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Liz Whitcher, as Chairman of the Watton Neighbourhood Plan Drainage Working Group was invited to speak. Liz gave an update from the Watton Neighbourhood Plan (copy attached) and it was recognised that the Drainage Group is to become independent and be re-named Watton & Saham Flood Action Group.

It was agreed that, in the interests of continuity, Places4People will be commissioned to progress the Watton Neighbourhood Plan through to it being 'made'.

9. **PLANNING**

Noted that Keith Gilbert, as a member of the Breckland Council Planning Committee took no part in agreeing comments made.

9.1 3OB/2020/0038/OB – Application to modify or discharge a planning obligation - Deed of Variation seeks to delete the Open Space Obligation from the S106 - 3PL/2005/0763/F - WATTON: Land North of Akrotiri Square Watton

The Town Council was unable to view the document relating to legal argument in respect of the disbarment of the 106 enforcement by the passage of twelve years. It is assumed that this is for legal reasons. However, Watton has not been well served by the lack of action by Breckland District Council in respect of this site. Watton has one of the largest deficits of open space provision in the Breckland area. The expected provision on this site could make a valuable contribution towards the reduction of that deficit.

The application shows serious bad faith on the part of the developer who having made their profits, now seek to evade their responsibilities as they originally agreed. Given that the current situation has been brought about by the historic lack of action from BDC the Town Council would ask that this agreement be rigorously defended in its existing form by BDC on behalf of the residents of the town.

9.2 3PL/2020/1222/HOU - Single storey rear extension. new window to front elevation. - WATTON: 18 Bluebell Close

No comments

9.3 3PL/2020/1236/O - Outline application for 8 dwellings - WATTON: 123 Brandon Road Watton

The Town Council considers that eight dwellings would be an overdevelopment of the land on this site. It would result in a density of development totally out of context in the location which would cause detriment to the residential amenity of the area. Brandon road is a busy A road and the introduction of increased vehicular movements in and out of the site could be problematic given the density of the proposed development.

The Watton Neighbourhood Plan Drainage Group have submitted separate comments in relation to drainage issues on the site.

9.4 3PL/2020/1266/F - To install a surface mounted bunded diesel fuel tank measuring 5.0m long x 3.0m wide x 2.5m high, for private use. - WATTON: Neaton Business Park North, Serco Group Norwich Road

No comments

9.5 3PL/2020/1276/F - Continued use of summerhouse for sui generis beauty business following previous temporary permission 3PL/2018/0098/F and 3PL/2019/1084/F - WATTON: 1 Paddock Close

The activity the subject of this application, according to reports of local residents, continues to exacerbate parking problems in the location. Watton Town Council therefore requests that this issue is taken into consideration in the interest of the residential amenity of nearby properties.

9.6 3PL/2020/1285/HOU Alteration to driveway to provide safer access to/from the A1075. To include new central access with drop curb, closing off existing access by extending cobbled wall. WATTON: Loch House, 83 Dereham Road

No comments

9.7 3OB/2020/0027/OB - Vary S106 on 3PL/2014/1314/O , Third Schedule, Open Space 1.1, to allow commencement of the development prior to submission of the extent of Open Space Land being agreed with the Council & submission & approval of Open Space Works Specification & 1.4 approval of the nominated body. - The Finches Finch Drive/Griston Road Watton IP25 6WE

Watton Town Council could see no document on file stating why the developer would wish to change the terms of the 106 agreement. The Town Council is of the view that to vary this condition would be unreasonable. The provision of open space in Watton is desperately required to reduce the existing deficit of open space in the town, any attempts to delay this provision should be resisted to ensure that sufficient time is permitted for BDC to enforce any open space provision should it be required. It appears counter intuitive to allow the commencement of development on the site before full details of the open space to be provided is resolved in practical terms.

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

10.1 It was agreed that Watton Town Council will create a part time PEPSO post at the termination of the existing SLA with Swaffham Town Council. This post will be formally offered to the current PEPSO post holder on her current terms and conditions of service. The HR committee will convene on December 10th 2020 to finalise these matters.

Notes from Liz Whitcher for speaking on Item 8 at Town Council meeting on 24 November 2020

I am speaking as a member of the public co-opted on to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and as Chairman of the Drainage Group which is a subgroup of the Steering Group. In both roles, I strongly commend the commissioning of a consultant to finish the draft of the Neighbourhood Plan for submission to Breckland. I understand that the consultant would be Ian Poole who has experience in planning and has already presented useful feedback on the most recent draft of the Neighbourhood Plan, so he is very familiar with it. I also understand that there are sufficient funds available if the funding agreed with Breckland to match that provided by Locality is applied for.

The relevant Planning Officers at Breckland will consider all the planning policies proposed in the document and several of those arise from the work of the Drainage Group.

The Drainage Group can report to you now some news received in the last week. This news only came to light because of the outcome of two visits we made to Abel's about their new development off the Norwich Road where the new Lidl is proposed to be. Abel's will be building 48 dwellings on the rest of the site and we helped them with our knowledge of the local ditches into which they plan to put the overflow from their attenuation basin. I asked them for the name of a senior manager at Anglian Water and they gave me two names. I wrote them a strong email outlining the problems here and in Saham Toney. I received a reply last week from the Growth Liaison Manager who deals with new developments. He told us they are working on a strategy for the whole catchment which includes Griston and Carbrooke as well as Watton and Saham Toney to identify the key places where surface water gets into the foul sewers and causes them to surcharge. This is in times of heavy rain like that on 25 September when 67mm fell in 24 hours and not just in the 3 summer storms we have suffered since 2009.

What is even better news is that they are working with officers from the Lead Local Flood Authority and from NCC Highways. Surface water in the catchment is dealt with by Highways drains and a series of watercourses that run from the east near the Norwich Road roundabout turning south and west to Cranswick's land and then north to the Watton Brook. Many sources of surface water flooding come from overflowing watercourses not kept clear by landowners and by blocked Highways drains. The Lead Local Flood Authority can instruct landowners to keep their watercourses clear and Highways can be asked to have a more regular jetting of key drain systems.

The Group have been banging on about the agencies working together for the past 3 years and at last we may have joined up thinking and working. Yesterday I received an email from the Flood Risk Manager at Anglian Water who looks at strategy and who we met in April 2018. In relation to working with the Lead Local Flood Authority, he wrote "The study is a modelling exercise that will look at the extent of surface water flooding across the catchment. Anglian Water have supported this study and we look forward to receiving some results from this work very soon, which will then help to inform any work led by the LLFA. Where work removes surface water from the foul sewer network, we can support this with partnership funding." In relation to their own work he wrote "Watton is one of the catchments that we've shortlisted to undertake work in over the next 4 years or so. The information you provided..... will be very useful as we start to identify where we can deliver most benefit to the community by removing surface water from the foul sewer network. As we've discussed before, solutions to managing surface water may include property level retrofits of water butts and rain planters (we have recently done this in Gt Yarmouth, Norwich and down in Essex) and solutions in public space, such as road side rain gardens, swales, basins or ponds. Your support, and the support of the Drainage Working Group and

Parish Council, as we start to identify the opportunities to undertake this work and engage with the community would be much appreciated.”

I take part in Zoom conferences with the National Flood Forum (NFF) every 2 weeks. Leaders of Flood Action Groups from all over England attend most of them from the west and the north and where river and coastal flooding are rife. I can assure you that to have come as far as we have in 3 and a half years is amazing. Some others have been struggling for 20 years to get appropriate action. Part of our success is due to good relationships with the agency officers who have stayed constant over the time apart from 2 changes and we have built new relationships with them.

To support mitigating the flood risk in Watton, we have put drainage policies into the Neighbourhood Plan. These need to be put into acceptable planning terms which is what the consultant will do. There are many other policies about other important aspects of our town and these are also to be put into the right language. The new planning legislation is likely to take many months to put into law so having a Neighbourhood Plan with acceptable planning policies particularly in relation to drainage will be helpful in relation to planning applications however small.

We are only a group of 4 and we need more help from the community and that looks as if it would fit in with what Anglian Water are planning. We plan to have our own interactive website which can include a Facebook page and we have the name of a young man in Watton recommended by the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce who can design that for us. Given the response from the Flood Risk Manager, I am going to ask him if Anglian Water would provide funding. We also want to change our name. As we have been working with Saham Toney over the years and as the foul sewers from Saham go to the pumping station at the bridge on Swaffham Road, we would like our new name to be Watton & Saham Flood Action Group. There are some residents in Saham who want action and we would make it a condition of using that name that Saham residents are involved as well as some in Watton who have shown interest. Will the Council support the new name Watton & Saham Flood Action Group and our proposal to have a website paid for by Anglian Water or some other suitable organisation? A decision by the end of the year would be welcome.

On the website we will acknowledge the support of the Town Council as we would not be where we are if you had not sent our Flood Investigation Report to all the agencies in November 2017. And we will still report to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Liz Whitcher
Chairman
Watton Neighbourhood Plan Drainage Working Group

24 November 2020