

## **ATTLEBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting of the above Council held in Attleborough Town Hall, Queens Square, Attleborough, Norfolk, on Monday 7 December 2009 at 7pm.**

### **PRESENT**

Cllrs V Dale (Chair), G Farrow, B Waters, N Keach, S Schucroft, K Pettitt, S Taylor, J Taylor, G Firman, A Sturt, J McBride, A Marchant, R Reynolds; H Elias (Town Clerk); District Cllrs A Stasiak, K Martin, and S Rogers; no members of the press were present.

### **1 TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were accepted from Cllrs S Middlebrook and Mrs D Francis (both family commitments).

### **2 TO AGREE A RESOLUTION THAT THE MEETING BE ADJOURNED TO ALLOW A PERIOD OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (maximum 10 minutes in duration – NB: a second period of public participation will be allowed at the end of the meeting)**

No members of the public were present apart from the District Councillors.

### **3 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS BELOW**

The Clerk declared a prejudicial interest in Item 19 and left the room when the discussion turned to her salary.

### **4 TO RECEIVE THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (refer to diary list)**

Mrs Dale thanked everyone for attending the Remembrance Sunday parade, especially Councillor Reynolds who had stepped in at the last minute to carry the flag when Cllr Keach was unable to attend. She also thanked those who were able to attend the Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial on Armistice Day. She and the Clerk had shown Breckland Council's Maxine O'Mahony around Attleborough, and she had commented on how well the town catered for dog walkers and on the lack of play areas for youngsters. The highlight of the month had been the Christmas Carnival and lights switch-on. The Christmas Lights Committee and the Christmas Carnival Committee had worked so hard to get this done and put Attleborough on the map. Many compliments had been received from residents and visitors from far afield who had been impressed with the festivities.

### **5 TO CONFIRM AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (previously circulated – factual discrepancies only)**

The minutes were agreed and signed.

### **6 To receive a brief update on any items not listed below (NB Information only – no resolutions may be passed)**

CCTV: a site meeting had been held at Connaught Hall with the operators and Breckland. The operators recommended relocating the new camera from the existing post to a new post attached to the apex of Connaught Hall. Representatives of Connaught Hall were in favour. It was suggested a second camera could be installed at the far corner of the Skatepark which would have a better view of the skatepark. The cost would be c£5,000-£7,000 and an extraordinary full Council would be required to pass the resolution. Infra red lighting was also suggested to aid recognition in the dark. The consensus was that there was no money in the budget, so an extra meeting would not be necessary.

Norfolk Constabulary: the vast improvement in answering and dealing with the non-emergency police number was noted with pleasure.

## **7 TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE COMMITTEE MINUTES: (refer to enclosed document)**

i) Planning x 2: an application for a two-storey dwelling had been recommended for refusal. It was little better than the previous application for the site.

ii) Town Hall: the smell was particularly bad from the air conditioning units in the Chamber. The Clerk explained that they had been recently cleaned and sprayed following a previous smell. She was directed to call out the fitters again. **ACTION: Town Clerk**

iii) Open Spaces: Fencing was being manufactured for the Recreation Ground. Access gates were still outstanding, though it was hoped one set of the existing gates could be re-used. The groundsmen would be able to lift out the posts with the digger.

iv) Finance: the precept was discussed below.

## **8 TO RECEIVE REPRESENTATIVES' REPORTS**

Town Charities: the AGM would take place on 11 January, ahead of the Annual Assembly. A member of the public had asked if some of the Charities' land could be used for allotments. The individual sites would have to be considered, but it was generally agreed to be a good idea. Consideration and concerns raised were those of access and water.

Town Twinning: Cllr Pettitt was thanked for her help and support. A query was raised about a grant the following year. The Finance Committee has recommended a donation of £100 in the following financial year, which will be paid after 1 April 2010.

## **9 TO RECEIVE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS**

Light Dragoons Welcome Home Parade: Pupils from the Junior School had asked Breckland to pay for a bus so they could attend. It had been a fantastic day with exhibitions and displays. It was suggested that perhaps Attleborough could hold such an event.

Remembrance Day & Armistice Day: District Councillors had attended both these occasions.

Local Government Reform: The Boundary Committee has recommended that Norfolk should be governed by a unitary authority. (This does not remove the Town Council). There will be a six-week consultation period. This option would probably mean more powers and responsibilities being devolved to town & parish council level. Cost savings should follow as there are currently a Chief Executive plus department heads in each of the seven districts.

LDF Core Strategy: This should be ratified by Breckland Council on 17 December. District Councillors from the Attleborough Task Force have consulted the legal team regarding the minor changes; a relief road should be built before the houses. There has been no response to date.

Youth Football Club: The club had received just under £3,000 from Breckland Council, a sponsored walk had raised a further £3,000 and a funeral director's had offered a donation. They might have enough to finish their plans and in future an all-weather pitch might be possible.

## **10 TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF NOVEMBER'S FINANCIAL STATEMENT (refer to enclosed documents)**

The Council is within budget.

## **11 TO AUTHORISE PAYMENT OF BILLS AND CHEQUES (refer to list)**

A request was made that the cheque to Fresh Air be held back until the air conditioning smell had been solved. A query was raised about the hire of a generator.

**It was proposed by Cllr Pettitt and carried by Council that the cheques be authorised for payment. ACTION: Town Clerk**

## **12 TO AGREE TO COMPLETE THE FLOORING OF THE TOWN HALL**

The remaining carpets in the Town Hall were fraying, discoloured and worn. Quotes had been received to lay carpet tiles in the Tourist, Council and Clerk's offices and on the landings and to replace carpet with safety flooring in the first floor toilet and boiler room. The stair carpet would be cleaned and coir matting laid in the entrance lobby.

**It was proposed by Cllr Pettitt and carried by Council that the quote from New Line (UK) be accepted. ACTION: Town Clerk**

## **13 TO CONSIDER SETTING UP A DEDICATED ATTLEBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL WEBSITE**

Cllr Middlebrook had offered to create a website free of charge as part of his Councillor's "duties". The Council's website would be an opportunity to involve the public more. The Council should have its own domain name and hosting. The website could be updated by the office staff. A query was raised as to what the cost to Council would be if Cllr Middlebrook left the Council.

**It was proposed by Cllr Pettitt and carried by Council that a website should be created. ACTION: Cllr Middlebrook**

## **14 TO APPROVE THE BUDGET AND PRECEPT REQUIREMENT FOR 2010-2011 (see attached sheets)**

The Mayor thanked Cllrs Keach and Farrow and the Clerk for their hard work in finalising the budget. The fifth version was to be presented to the Council. Cllr Keach thanked the Chairs of the Committees for their endeavours and the tough decisions they had had to make. The Town Council has limited income and the balance, needed to pay for what the Council maintains and has to do, is raised through the Precept. There will have to be an increase to cover the Council's rising costs and to put money aside to deal with the dilapidated Town Hall shed, to fund a new cemetery and the Dell cemetery extension as a stop-gap for the next five years, plus play equipment and machinery replacement, Attleborough In Bloom, Town Hall damp proofing, toilets, rates and utilities. The interest on Council's investments had reduced from 5.7% to 1%. With regard to salaries the Clerk's pay was to be aligned with national scales in recognition of her knowledge, hard work and involvement with the LDF; the Admin Assistant had passed her Intermediate AAT exams – she was taken on at a low wage level and it had been agreed that she should be paid according to her qualifications and abilities. However, she had been "poached" and a vacancy now existed for an Admin Assistant. Other wages had been kept down. It was proposed that the precept should be increased by £13,260 which for a Band D house would be £3.81 per year (the price of a pint and a half of beer) or just over 7p per week. The Chair of the Finance Committee explained that the Committee would have preferred a lower increase but was pleased that Attleborough compared well with other local market towns.

**It was proposed by Cllr Keach and carried by Council that the precept should be raised to £244,430 in the 2010-2011 financial year.**

The post of Admin Assistant should be advertised with Archant and the Diss Express. Salary should depend on experience and qualifications. The closing date should be 22 December, with the Clerk to draw up a "long list" and the Mayor & Deputy Mayor to draw up a short list.

**ACTION: Town Clerk, Mayor & Deputy Mayor**

## **15 TO APPROVE QUOTES FOR THE TOPOGRAPHICAL & TREE SURVEYS FOR THE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE DELL CEMETERY EXTENSION**

Breckland Council required a detailed tree survey and topographical survey showing burial plots in relation to the trees in the Dell before it would accept planning application to turn the former play area into a cemetery extension. Several firms had been contacted, but only Plandescil had the staff to complete both parts of the survey. Other firms could do either the burial plot survey or the tree survey and the aggregate cost would be greater.

**It was proposed by Cllr Keach and carried by Council that the survey work be awarded to Plandescil. ACTION: Town Clerk**

### **16 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE PLAY PROJECT AND QUESTIONNAIRE REPLIES**

Over 4,600 newsletters had been delivered to homes in the parish, and only 19 responses received to the play questionnaire. Most people wanted equipment on Gaymer's Meadow and more equipment at the Recreation Ground. Although some had requested a swimming pool the Council knew this would not happen, but requests for tennis courts and a "proper park" were more feasible. There had only been two offers from people willing to join a community group to raise funds for play equipment. It was suggested that enquiries should be made of the school if they hired out their tennis courts in the summer. **ACTION: Town Clerk**

### **17 TO CONSIDER THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE STRUCTURES**

It was noted that many items of Council business are passed from committees to full Council then returned to committee before being ratified by full Council. This led to delays. It was suggested that for a trial period Council should operate with the full Council meeting on the first working Monday of the month as now, with a General Purposes Committee made up of all councillors in between. This would ensure that all Councillors knew details of the business under discussion. Planning applications would be displayed around the room and the doors opened at 6.30pm to allow people to view the plans. A file would be available of the correspondence to view. Chairs of Committees would be replaced by Project Leaders for different items. Currently Council has over 50 meetings per year; this would reduce the meetings to c25. Provision for public involvement would continue as now.

**It was proposed by Cllr Pettitt and carried by Council that the full Council should continue to meet on the first working Monday of the month and that a General Purposes Committee should meet of the third Monday of the month starting on 4 January till the end of the Civic year. ACTION: Town Clerk**

### **18 TO AGREE TO RAISE THE AMOUNT WHICH CAN BE SPENT BY THE CLERK AND COMMITTEES WITHOUT FULL COUNCIL'S APPROVAL FROM £350 TO £500 AND TO AMEND THE STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL STANDING ORDERS ACCORDINGLY**

As prices have risen very little can be authorised for under £500. If the proposal was passed the General Purposes Committee would be included in the arrangements.

**It was proposed by Cllr S Taylor and carried by Council that the amount which could be spent by the clerk and committees without full Council's approval be raised from £350 to £500, and that the standing orders and financial standing orders be amended accordingly.**

### **19 TO APPROVE THE PLAY AREA SAFETY CHECKLISTS FOR REGULAR USE**

The Clerk has been advised that any claim against the Council could only be defended if a written risk assessment was in place and regular recorded checks were carried out. If the format was agreeable a similar checklist would be produced for all the Council's play areas. A discussion ensued as to whether the groundsmen were qualified to undertake the inspection, if further training was needed and if their pay should be increased. It was explained that no special training was needed; it was a visual check only and specialist inspections were undertaken by RoSPA annually. The discussion turned to the Clerk's salary; she declared a prejudicial interest and left the room, returning when the checklists were under discussion again.

District Councillors A Stasiak and S Rogers left the meeting at 8.40pm

**It was proposed by Cllr S Taylor and carried by Council that the play areas checklist should be adopted and also adapted for Council's other play areas. ACTION: Town Clerk**

**20 TO ADOPT THE RISK ASSESSMENT FOR THE PUBLIC TOILETS (see attached sheet)**

This had been modified by the Health & Safety Committee and was a work in progress. The document should be reviewed annually.

**It was proposed by Cllr Keach and carried by Council that the Risk Assessment for the Public Toilets be adopted. ACTION: Town Clerk**

**21 TO DISCUSS AND ACT UPON CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED (refer to summary of correspondence received since last meeting below)**

i) St Luke's Hospital: St Luke's stated that a maintenance team visited the Station Road property regularly and complaints log would be useful. However, it was noted that the property was dangerous and unkempt, with holes in the fence. A letter should be sent and the farmhouse monitored. **ACTION: Town Clerk**

ii) 20mph Zones on approach roads: local support is required for the County Council to act. The Town Council is pressing for a 7.5t limit reducing HGVs in the town centre which should improve road safety.

iii) End of tether campaign: Advice had been taken from the ILPH, which the campaign members had not agreed with.

iv) Attleborough High School: thanks for sponsoring prizes.

v) Land Registry confirmation of transfer of land behind Cyprus Road to the Town Council.

vi) BDC's Town & Parish Council Forum Newsletter: for information

vii) BDC Town & Parish Newsletter Issue 3: for information

viii) Bulk fuel syndicate: this appears to be more suited to small communities.

The following were received after the agenda was published; no resolutions may be passed.

ix) Thanks from Maxine O'Mahony: for her guided tour of Attleborough.

x) Lidl litter bin: it is the store's responsibility to ensure that the car park is free of litter.

xi) Bank: Council has a new Business Banking Manager.

xii) Policing: Reply from Christopher Fraser, MP & letter to him from Superintendent K Elliot.

xiii) Town Guide: Spider Solutions has asked if the Council is to publish the next guide in the New Year. The consensus was that this was too soon and that the following year would be better.

xiv) Low Carbon Emissions: Taking Attleborough Forward has signed up to a Government scheme for reducing emissions and would like the Council to write in support of this.

xv) NNAB Buy a Brick Appeal: to raise money for an activity centre for those who are visually impaired

xvi) Pride in Breckland Tree Dressing Competition: 5-11 December. Contact Richard Wills.

**22 TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ON TOWN AFFAIRS (NB information only – No resolutions may be passed)**

i) Street sign: a second sign for Arlington Gardens visible to drivers heading out of the town was requested.

ii) Safe Dog Policy: a request was made for Breckland to adopt a "safe dog" policy where dogs off the lead can be called back to their owners.

iii) Launderette: It was reported that it had gone into liquidation.

iv) Boxing Tournament: This had been well-attended.

v) Dog fouling at Gaymer's Meadow: this was increasing and could cause a health issue with children playing.

vi) Food Waste: take-away rubbish is disgusting around town. A suggestion was made that posters encouraging customers to dispose of their rubbish responsibly could be given to the businesses to display, and that a letter be sent asking them to clear their rubbish on the footways within a certain distance of their shops.

vii) Station Road: There is no “give way” sign at the Obelisk for those joining the one-way system from the direction of the station.

viii) Youth Centre: the Community and Enterprise Centre has offered to house a youth project. The details must be cleared and the Police consulted before the project starts.

ix) Funeral: The Mayor had attended the Devlin funeral; the family were delighted that the Mayor had attended in an official capacity as family members had been councillors in the past.

x) Letter of thanks: Karen Maran, the cleaner, had written to the Mayor thanking the Council for inviting her to attend the social evening and making her feel appreciated.

#### **23 TO RECEIVE ITEMS FOR NEXT MONTH’S AGENDA**

No items were requested.

#### **24 TO AGREE A RESOLUTION THAT THE MEETING BE ADJOURNED TO ALLOW A PERIOD OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (NB: 10 minutes maximum)**

**It was proposed by Cllr Keach and carried by Council that the meeting be adjourned to allow the public to speak.**

Items raised were: the Bar Franchise.

**The meeting was reconvened**

District Councillor K Martin left the meeting.

**25 THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING WAS CONFIRMED as Monday 4 January 2010 at 7pm**

**The meeting closed at 9.45pm**

**Chair:**