



WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL

ASSETS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

3 JULY 2017 – 7.30 pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: Councillor Tibbs, Chairman; Councillors Balsevics, Hill, Miss Hoy, Oliver and Miss Oliver.

Apologies: Councillor Human.

In attendance: Councillors Tierney and Wing, who the Chairman allowed to speak but not vote on the items of business covered by minutes A4/17 and A5/17. Mr M South, the council's Assets Manager

The minutes of the meeting of the Assets Management Committee held on 12 June 2017 were confirmed and signed.

A3/17 Public participation - Wisbech Market Place

A parishioner reminded members of comments that she had made at this year's Annual Town Assembly regarding the locations of the public seating on Wisbech Market Place and the often untidy appearance of the market place caused by public littering and piles of traders' waste.

She suggested that, pending the implementation of an enhancement scheme for the Market Place as a long term solution, the council could restore the seating in the central area of the Market Place to a layout similar to that which existed prior to removal of the central plinth. She expressed the opinion that it is not pleasant to sit in one of the seats at one end of the centre with somebody sitting immediately behind you or close to piles of rubbish.

The parishioner expressed the hope that the council would be able to take some action in the short-term to improve the situation and that a permanent remedy could be achieved through the delivery of an enhancement scheme for Wisbech Market Place (minute A4/17 refers).

Members decided that the comments of the parishioner be noted and that they be taken into account when discussing matters relating to operation, management and enhancement of Wisbech Market Place.

A4/17 Wisbech Market Place enhancements

Further to minute A13/16, members considered further the development of a scheme of enhancement for Wisbech Market Place.

The Clerk reminded members that it had long been the intention of Wisbech Town Council to enhance Wisbech Market Place (both as a trading area and community space) and the first action taken in that regard was removal, in November 2015, of the central plinth.

Members were reminded by the Clerk that the former Market Place Management Committee had decided on 8 February 2016 (minute M9/15 refers) that, as a result of discussing how to enhance further (following removal of the central plinth) Wisbech Market Place, to engage a firm of consultants - the one which was involved in the Heritage Lottery Fund bid in relation to the High Street and is performing a project management role in respect of the Wisbech 2020 Vision - to produce design concepts for enhancement of the Market Place. The cost of the consultants' work



was met from the “Tesco” Section 106 Planning Obligations monies to be made available (subject to agreement, on a case by case basis, by Fenland District Council) to Wisbech Town Council for schemes which would benefit the town centre.

The Assets Management Committee considered on 1 November 2016 (at minute A8/16) the “Wisbech Market Place: Scoping Study” which had been produced by the firm of consultants. There was further discussion of this matter at 13 February 2017 meeting of this committee (minute A13/16 refers). The Clerk reminded members of the decisions which had been reached at minutes A8/16 and A13/16, which included establishing a Task and Finish Group (to include not only councillors but also a small number of representatives of the local community).

Councillor Tierney expressed the opinion that the scoping study does contain some good ideas but it may not provide the complete “solution” in terms of enhancing Wisbech Market Place and that it is important for this council to progress the matter in an appropriate manner. He suggested that progress should be made in establishing the Task and Finish Group, which should be given a short timescale to develop ideas.

Councillor Miss Hoy expressed the opinion that the work of the Task and Finish Group should be informed by consultation with the public, market traders and town centre retailers. To make it clear to the public and consultees that the council has no pre-conceived ideas or proposals, any questions asked by way of a consultation exercise should be generic (about people’s visits to the town centre etc) and not linked in any way to the content of the scoping study.

Councillor Oliver referred to figure 13 within the scoping study and suggested that it could be used as a means of seeking the views of the public on the principles contained within the document but without giving the impression that a decision had already been made by the council in terms of an enhancement scheme for the Market Place. He stated that he would prefer a consultation process which used the scoping study as a “starting point”.

Councillor Tierney expressed the opinion that it would be wrong to simply make public the scoping study, as it could lead the public to believe that decisions had already been made by the council with regard to the design of an enhancement scheme. The majority of members supported that opinion.

Councillor Oliver commented that other agencies have a role to play in terms of activity in the Market Place area; for example, arrangements for traffic management and enforcement of any regulations applying to the areas which are not under the control of Wisbech Town Council are matters for the County Council and Cambridgeshire County Council respectively.

Councillor Miss Hoy suggested that a survey be undertaken to ascertain the ideas and opinions of the public, market traders and town centre retailers. Other members of the committee were supportive of such an approach and, consequently, formulated the questions for an on-line survey.

All members of the committee are keen to deliver a scheme of enhancement which both benefits all users of the Market Place and adds to the viability and vitality of the town centre.

Members decided that

- (1) a Task and Finish Group, to include not only the members of this committee but also representatives of the local community, be established;
- (2) a public consultation exercise be undertaken, using a survey (asking the questions agreed by this committee) of the public plus delivery of a letter, to be written by the Clerk, to each of the traders on Wisbech Market Place and the retailers in Wisbech town centre;



- (3) following conclusion of the consultation exercise, a meeting of the Task and Finish Group be convened to consider the results of that exercise and to plan a way forward.

A5/17 Future of the Cleansing Contracts

Further to minute A16/16, members considered further the quotations received in relation to cleansing of Wisbech Market Place, the Town Hal and the public toilets in Wisbech Park and at Exchange Square, following the Clerk's ascertaining from each tenderer the impact upon their respective quotations if the council were to delete from the contract the daily collection and disposal of trade waste from the Market Place.

Members were reminded by the Clerk of the budget allocation for this work in 2017/18, which is the same as for 2016/17 (minute A16/16 refers).

Councillor Oliver sought members' views on whether this matter ought to be deferred until such time as the council is aware as to whether or not it would obtain Wisbech Castle (from Cambridgeshire County Council), given that the building would have a need for "caretaking" and cleansing and that those requirements could be included within a new Cleansing Contract or help to inform a decision as to whether the direct employment of staff (and the purchase of associated equipment) would provide a more appropriate means of addressing the council's total cleansing needs.

The majority of members consider that the council should not defer a decision on this matter but to accept a quotation, on the basis of the council's current cleansing requirements, at this meeting. If the council is successful in acquiring Wisbech Castle, consideration of its cleansing needs would form part of wider discussions in relation to its operation and management.

Members decided, on the proposal of Councillor Oliver, seconded by Councillor Hill

- (1) that the lowest quotation received for the cleansing of Wisbech Market Place (which includes the cost of the daily collection and disposal of trade waste from the Market Place), the Town Hall and the public toilets in Wisbech Park and at Exchange Square be accepted;
- (2) that the Clerk would discuss with the new contractor the contract term (a minimum of one year), a commencement date and the possibility of operating (and at what cost) a call-out service in relation to litter clearing etc on land owned by the Wisbech Town Council;
- (3) that, in the light of the decision at (1) above, the council would not examine the feasibility of employing staffing and purchasing equipment (instead of using the services of a contractor) for the council's cleansing work;
- (4) to RECOMMEND to the Policy and Resources Committee that any savings to the council as a result of entering into new contractual arrangements for cleansing of the council's community assets be transferred into an ear-marked reserve (to be created) to fund asset management works and associated equipment acquisitions.

(Members resolved to exclude the public for the part of this item of business which related to the potential land sale on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)

Meeting finished at 8.45 pm.

Signed.....



Dated.....