



WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL
ASSETS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

12 FEBRUARY 2018 – 7.30 pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: Councillor Tibbs, Chairman; Councillors Balsevics, Miss Hoy, Human, Oliver, Miss Oliver and Wing (from 8.00 pm).

Apologies: Councillors Hill and Maul.

In attendance: Mr M South, the council's Assets Manager.

The minutes of the meeting of the Assets Management Committee held on 30 October 2017 were confirmed and signed.

A17/17 Public Participation

(1) Allotments site at Dowgate Road

A small number of the tenants of the allotments site at Dowgate Road attended the meeting to inform the committee of their concerns regarding a number of matters affecting this site.

One of the tenants, acting as a spokesperson, made reference to the poor condition of the access road within the site, the lack of on-site facilities for the parking of vehicles, fly tipping which had occurred and the need for improvements to security of the site. That tenant expanded upon each of the points raised and circulated photographs of the situation that he had described to the committee.

The spokesperson for the tenants commented that, if the council were to provide the necessary materials for undertaking repairs to the roadway, a number of the tenants would be prepared to undertake, on a voluntary basis, those works.

Members decided that the comments of the allotment tenant be noted and that they be taken into account when discussing, at minute A21/17, issues relating to the council's allotments.

(2) Wisbech Market Place enhancements

A member of the public expressed the opinion that membership of the Task and Finish Group which had been set up to develop a scheme of enhancement for Wisbech Market Place ought to be expanded to include representatives of community groups within the town; for example, Wisbech Society and Wisbech in Bloom.

In response, the Chairman stated that it had been decided at the last meeting of the group that representatives of certain community groups in the town would be invited to attend future meetings.

Members decided that the comments of the member of the public and the response of the Chairman be noted.



A18/17 Wisbech Town Hall

Further to minute A12/17, the Clerk reported that, as a result of an assessment undertaken by a gas engineer, the central heating boiler at the Town Hall had been de-commissioned and it was, therefore, necessary for a replacement to be procured and installed. Consequently, the Clerk had invited three quotations for that work, which he had reported to 8 January 2018 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee (minute R18/17 refers) the two that he had received.

At minute R18/17 the Policy and Resources Committee decided that the quotation for replacement of the central heating boiler at Wisbech Town Hall, in the sum of £5,680.42 (plus VAT), the lowest received, be accepted and that the Clerk would make arrangements with the contractor for the installation work to undertaken as a matter of priority.

The Clerk informed members that a new central heating boiler had been installed on 25 and 26 January 2018. The next stage will be to ensure that the heating system at the Town Hall is able to operate with maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

Members were informed by the Clerk that, unfortunately, due to ongoing workload demands, it had not yet proved possible for progress to be made in effecting works which would improve the security of staff at the Town Hall. This would, however, be pursued.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk be noted.

A19/17 Wisbech Market Place

Members considered the operational issues in relation to use of the Market Place (both as a community space and a trading area).

General performance and activity 2017/18

The number of traders at Wisbech Market Place has remained fairly constant during the financial year 2017/18 to date. The council's Assets Manager provided further details to members in terms of the number of new traders and their goods.

The Clerk reminded members that the trading activity on Wisbech Market Place is now a seven days per week operation. Friday and Saturday remain the busiest days; in fact, the level of trading on Saturdays is now at its highest level. Increases in trade are being seen on other days of the week; however, officers remain keen to increase further the level of trading on those days.

The level of trading at the Wisbech Central Sunday Market (which consists of both a "traditional" market and car boot sellers) remains high. Councillor Miss Hoy expressed the opinion that the Sunday Market and car boot event had proved very successful and she believes, as had been indicated to members by the council's Assets Manager, that this activity is improving the vitality and viability of the town centre on Sundays.

Officers of the council continue to operate incentive schemes to encourage new, long-term traders, allowing them lower rent levels initially but increasing them to full rent once it is clear that they will continue to trade.

The Clerk reminded members that this committee had decided, at its last meeting (minute A13/17 refers), that, in an attempt to increase the footfall at Wisbech Market on weekdays, the traditional market on Wednesdays be supplemented by a car boot sale and concessions be offered to those existing traders who currently trade on Wisbech Market on at least three other days per week to



trade at the market on Thursdays on a free-of-charge basis. Both of these arrangements had been operated by officers since the last meeting of the committee.

Members were informed by the Clerk that operation of car boot sales on Wednesdays had proved very successful, despite the poor weather conditions in recent weeks, and had generated additional footfall. Those participating in the car boot sales and the “traditional” traders had indicated that they would be supportive of continuation of this arrangement on Wednesdays.

Unfortunately, the incentive scheme for increasing attendance by market traders on Thursdays had been less successful; it had resulted in one of the council’s licensed traders returning to trading on Thursdays and had required the council to reduce the rent of another trader who was already trading on Thursdays.

Given the success of introducing car boot sales on Wednesdays, the Clerk suggested that members may wish to consider extending the arrangement to apply to Thursdays also. Those participating in the car boot sales on Wednesdays and/or Sundays and the “traditional” Thursday traders had indicated that they would be supportive of the introduction of such an arrangement.

The Clerk made reference to concerns which had been raised recently by some members regarding the appearance of some elements of the car boot sales (i.e. items for sale being laid on the Market Place surfacing) and stated that officers are taking action to address the situation (i.e. they had taken the stance, following discussion with the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of this Committee and the Mayor, that items must be placed for sale on tables or other suitable structures). Members concur with the stance that items for sale at the council’s car boot events on Wisbech Market Place must be displayed on tables or on/in other suitable structures and that officers of the council would operate the car boot events on that basis.

The level of income generated by the market for the period 1 October to 31 December 2017 was £12,335.86, which is at a lower level than for the same period in 2016 (at £15,939.82).

The level of expenditure on market operations (rates, maintenance, cleansing and utilities) during the period 1 October to 31 December 2017 was £7,756.61, which shows a decrease over the same period in 2016 (at £11,779.31). Part of this is due to the fact that the council has, to date, spent only around 30% of its 2017/18 budget (of £3,000) for maintenance works to the Market Place.

The council’s Assets Manager informed members that there is a need to undertake repair and maintenance works to some of the electricity points on the Market Place and he explained to members the details of such works. He provided members with estimated costs of the works to install a bollard or cabinet including power sockets (at a cost of approximately £1,000) in the location of the lamp column which had been removed to facilitate the Halloween Spooktacular (that electricity supply is used for the lighting to the Christmas tree) and of repairing, or replacing with a different type of installation, the three “pop-up” structures. The council’s Assets Manager informed members that the estimated cost of repairing those structures is £800 per unit, whereas replacement with a “sunken” facility would be approximately £1,600 per unit.

Members are in no doubt that electrical works are required at Wisbech Market Place but, being mindful that enhancement works are being proposed for that area, which could, consequently, have implications for the type and location of electrical installations, consider that the council should incur the minimal amount of expenditure at this time in that regard; this means that works to repair, rather than replace, the “pop-up” electrical installations would be undertaken.

Members decided that

- (1) the current situation be noted;



- (2) in a continued attempt to increase the footfall at Wisbech Market, the traditional market on Thursdays be supplemented by a car boot sale (instead of on Wednesdays, as agreed at minute A13/17) and that the concessions which had been offered for Thursday trading (introduced at minute A13/17) be ceased upon commencement of car boot sales on that day of the week;
- (3) with regard to the undertaking of repairs to the electrical installations at Wisbech Market Place, a cabinet including power sockets be installed in the location of the lamp column which had been removed to facilitate the Halloween Spooktacular and that the minimal amount necessary to repair the damaged electrical installations be undertaken.

Community events

Wisbech Market Place continues to be used as the location for a number of community events and festivals and will “host” the following events during 2018:

- St George's Day event on 21 April
- WisBEACH Day on 3 June
- Armed Forces Day on 24 June
- Arles Festival on 15 July
- Halloween Spooktacular (to be delivered in association with the Horsefair Shopping Centre) on 27 October
- Christmas Lights Extravaganza on 25 November
- Wisbech Christmas Fayre on 9 December.

The Clerk informed members that applications would be made to the Local Highway Authority for road closures for the Market Place and certain surrounding streets for the occasions when a community event or festival would be taking place on the Market Place on a Sunday, to enable both that activity and a Sunday Market with associated car boot event to be accommodated in the town centre.

The Clerk mentioned that officers continue to look for other activities which could take place on Wisbech Market Place, such as musical and other entertainment, all aimed at increasing footfall (and, hence, vitality and viability) in Wisbech town centre; he commented that any ideas from members would be welcomed.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that they would inform officers of any ideas they may have in terms of increasing/improving the use of the Market Place for community events.

Market Place enhancements

The Clerk informed members that, further to minute A13/17, the Task and Finish Group which had been set up by this committee to develop and implement a scheme of enhancement for the Market Place (as both a trading area and community space) had now met on four occasions and a further meeting had been scheduled for 6 March 2018.

Members were informed by the Clerk that at the most recent meeting, held on 5 February 2018, the group considered some plans/designs of possible schemes for the Market Place. As a result of that consideration, revised plans would be produced for consideration at 6 March 2018 meeting of the group.

Ultimately, the Task and Finish Group will make recommendations to this committee in terms of an enhancement scheme for Wisbech Market Place.



Councillor Miss Hoy commented that this scheme is a priority for the council and she is hopeful that it would soon be possible to have a proposal ready for consultation with the public.

Members decided that the current situation be noted and that the Clerk would keep this committee updated on progress being achieved by the Task and Finish Group.

A20/17 Public toilets

Further to minute A14/17, the Clerk informed members that the council's Assets Manager had made an assessment of the works required to refurbish the Disabled toilet in the manner indicated by this committee (i.e. to make it available as a facility for all members of the public) and had obtained quotations for the necessary works.

The council's Assets Manager explained to members the results of his assessment of the works required and the estimated costs, based upon the quotations that he has obtained in that regard, of such works. He informed members also of the estimated cost of repair/replacement of one window and one door (plus frame) to the Exchange Square toilets. In addition, he expressed his concern with regard to making the Disabled toilet multi-use because of the increased risk of vandalism to that toilet.

In addition, the council's Assets Manager had obtained details and undertaken some research in relation to Changing Places, in case members wish to consider providing such a facility as part of its public toilets "offer" in Wisbech. He presented this information, which included a photograph of a "model" layout of such a facility, to members.

Councillor Miss Hoy reported that, as the result of an approach to the council by the representative of a company which has been developing products and expertise in the field of public conveniences for more than 30 years, arrangements are being made for the Chairman of this committee, the Clerk and her to meet with the representative to discuss possible options for the refurbishment/enhancement of the council's public toilets.

Members decided that

- (1) the current situation be noted;
- (2) no works be undertaken to the toilets at Exchange Square at this time (see (4) below);
- (3) achieving the provision of a Changing Place in Wisbech be supported in principle but not necessarily as part of the toilets at Exchange Square;
- (4) this issue of repair and refurbishment of the public toilets owned and managed by Wisbech Town Council be considered further in the light of the outcome of the meeting with a representative of the company which has been developing products and expertise in the field of public conveniences.

A21/17 Allotments

The Clerk informed members that all of the improvement/development works to the allotments sites planned for the current financial year had been completed. In addition, some site clearance (general maintenance) works had been undertaken at the Dowgate Road allotments site in November 2017.

Members were reminded by the Clerk that this committee had committed to undertake works to install fencing and a gate at the Dowgate Road allotments site (minute A15/17 refers), to improve security at the site, during financial year 2018/19 and that the council, when setting its budget for



that financial year (minute 141/17 refers), had increased by £1,000.00 the allotments expenditure budget to assist in meeting the costs of the committed works.

Members considered the comments which had been made by the allotment tenant at minute A17/17 (1). They are aware that works to improve the security of the site had already been committed. Members, having viewed the photographs which had been circulated by the allotment tenant, share the view of tenants that repair of the access roadway and other maintenance works are necessary at the site.

The Clerk made the point that there is no funding available within the current financial year's budget to meet the cost of the works necessary to address the issues which had been raised by the tenants and mentioned again that a significant proportion of the budget for the 2018/19 financial year had already been committed.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the council's Assets Manager would, in liaison with the tenants, seek to deliver repair works to the access road at the Dowgate Road allotments site and examine the need for other maintenance works at the site.

A22/17 Land at Somers Road, Wisbech

The Clerk reminded members that this committee had decided at minute A16/17 that Wisbech Town Council would take on the lease, when surrendered by Fenland District Council, in respect of the area of land adjacent to the Somers Road car park and to the rear of the Queen Mary Centre for continued use as a car park. In reaching that decision the committee had been aware that repair and maintenance works are required to the surfacing of the car park.

Members were informed by the Clark that, further to minute A16/17, a lease between Wisbech Town Council and Cambridgeshire County Council in respect of this land had taken effect from 18 January 2018 (running until 30 December 2022). With regard to repair and maintenance of the surfacing of the car park, the condition of the surfacing had been inspected, an assessment of the works required had been undertaken and quotations for that work had been obtained. The council's Assets Manager detailed to members the works required, which are estimated to cost a maximum of £3,800.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that arrangements be made for the repair and maintenance of the surfacing of the car park to be undertaken.

Meeting finished at 8.50 pm

Signed.....

Dated.....