



WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL

WISBECH MARKET PLACE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

2 SEPTEMBER 2019 – 7.30 pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: Councillor Lynn, Chairman; Councillors Miss Hoy, Maul, Oliver, Prest, Topgood and Mrs Wallwork.

In attendance: Councillor Hill attended as an observer.

Apologies: None (all members were present).

The minutes of the meeting of the Wisbech Market Place Management Committee held on 30 July 2019 were confirmed and signed.

M8/19 Public participation - Wisbech Market Place operation and management

The operator of a business within the Market Place area expressed the opinion that the Market Place is very untidy on Thursdays, because of the car boot activity and the parking of vehicles (in the vicinity of his shop), which is achieving the opposite of attracting visitors to the town. He also expressed the opinion that a number of those who are operating as car booters are, because of what and how they are selling, should be deemed as market traders and, consequently, be licensed as such and pay traders' pitch fees.

The retailer expressed his awareness that Wisbech Town Council is seeking to increase trading in the town centre but he does not feel that the operation of a car boot activity is the way to do so. He circulated two photographs, one of the situation on 22 August and the other on 29 August 2019, to demonstrate the points that he had made.

A market trader stated that he concurs with the comments that had been made by the retailer; he too considers the Market Place to be untidy on Thursdays as a result of the car boot activity. The market trader expressed the following opinions:

- "unauthorised" vehicles should not be allowed to park on the Market Place
- there is a lack of council officer presence at Wisbech Market
- market rules are not being enforced by the council
- not all traders and car booters are treated equally by the council.

Members decided that the comments of the retailer and the market trader be noted and that they be taken into account as part of the discussions at minute M9/19.

M9/19 Wisbech Market Place – operational issues

The Clerk informed members that, from an operational perspective, there are no particular matters of significance to draw to members' attention at this time.

Members were reminded by the Clerk that the council has trading on Wisbech Market seven days a week and the Thursday and Sunday trading features a market and car boot event. He informed members that the busiest days are Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday; the Saturday market is now bigger than ever before; all of this activity adds to the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre.



Officers continue to try to attract additional traders to Wisbech Market on the “quieter” days; this has included an advertisement in the latest edition of Market Trader magazine.

The Clerk mentioned that income from markets activities during the current financial year to date is £18,704; compared to the proportionate budget estimate of £20,833. In addition, income of £1,696.00 has been received in respect of car boot activities during the first five months of the current financial year; compared to a proportionate budget estimate of £2,083.00. Markets expenditure (Rates, Cleansing, Utilities and Repairs/Maintenance) accords generally with the proportionate budgets. The exceptions to this, so far, are the Repairs and Maintenance budget and the Markets Promotion budget (a small amount of which has been used to fund the advertising costs mentioned above).

Members were informed by the Clerk that the National Association of Market Authorities (NABMA) offers a “health check” of the markets operated by NABMA members. As Wisbech Town Council is a member of NABMA, officers had taken advantage of that facility and a health check of Wisbech Market had been undertaken by an officer of NABMA on 24 August 2019. When the results of that exercise are known, the Clerk would report them to this committee.

With regard to Repairs and Maintenance of Wisbech Market Place, members are aware that the electrical system at Wisbech Market Place is in need of work to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose, i.e. that all of the system is fully operational and that users of the electricity supply are able to do so in a safe manner.

Further to minute M6/19 (at which the Chairman had reminded members that a quotation for the manufacture of new “lids” for the existing electrical installations had been accepted and that, consequently, one lid was in the process of being manufactured and was expected to be ready for installation by mid to late August 2019), the Chairman reported that he is still waiting to be informed by the contractor of a date for fitting the first lid and, given the need to progress urgently the electrical works, he sought members’ views as to whether it would be appropriate for the council to now seek to obtain additional quotations.

Members had been informed by the Chairman at minute M6/19 that the electrical contractor was in the process of producing a quotation for new electrical connections that would be accessed via the lids. The Chairman mentioned that such a quotation is still awaited and that he would pursue the matter with the electrical contractor.

Members discussed the comments which had been made at minute M8/19. Councillor Miss Hoy commented that the Clerk is already dealing with the council officer-related matters and made the point that the council currently has no physical means of preventing the parking of “unauthorised” vehicles on the Market Place; hopefully, the implementation of changes to traffic management in the Market Place area, proposed as part of the enhancement scheme, would lead to considerable improvement in that regard.

With regard to the car boot activity at Wisbech Market on Thursdays, as had been mentioned at minute M8/19, Councillor Miss Hoy commented that she had tried to take a balanced view on the matter; she is in no doubt that the activity does generate additional footfall in the town but is able to see that it could be seen by some as making the Market Place appear untidy. She mentioned that this committee had agreed rules as to what constitutes a tidy arrangement and she expects council officers to ensure that the rules are followed. Councillor Prest expressed his concurrence with the comments of Councillor Miss Hoy.

Councillor Maul commented that he had never been a supporter of the introduction of car boot activity on Wisbech Market Place. He shares the option which had been expressed at minute M8/19 that a number of those who operate as car booters should be deemed to be market traders. He expressed the opinion that although the car boot activity on Thursdays may have increased the



footfall in the town on that day of the week, it had not resulted in an increase in the level of trading in the town's retail premises. He summarised an e-mail that he had received from the Manager of Hughes Electrical (Wisbech store), explaining the company's rationale for deciding to no longer open its Wisbech premises on Thursdays, i.e. because of the low level of trading on that day of the week in Wisbech. In the e-mail, the manager of the store expresses the opinion that the prevention of vehicles in the Market Place, as part of the proposed enhancement scheme, would have a negative impact upon the store's customers because of the consequent difficulty in being able to collect large and bulky electrical items from the store.

Further to the Motion agreed by Council (minute 44/19 refers), members considered, in the light of the information which had been provided by Councillor Meekins, the possibility/feasibility of introducing a water refill point on Wisbech Market Place.

Councillor Miss Hoy expressed her appreciation for the time and effort that had been devoted by Councillor Meekins in researching this matter and identifying potential options.

Councillor Meekins had identified, within the report that he had produced, five potential water refill stations and had assessed the advantages and disadvantages of purchasing or renting the units. Members discussed the options and the best means by which to procure their preferred unit.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported be noted;
- (2) the Chairman and the Clerk would seek to obtain additional quotations for the manufacture and installation of lids for the electrical installations at Wisbech Market Place;
- (3) the Chairman would pursue the quotation for electrical works at Wisbech Market Place;
- (4) the car boot activity on Thursdays be continued, as a means of seeking to increase the amount of footfall in Wisbech on that day of the week, but it must operate in accordance with rules which had been set by this committee and the council needs to be clear as to what is the distinction between a car booter and a market trader;
- (5) with regard to the provision of a water refill point on Wisbech Market Place, the council would procure the unit shown as option 1 within the report produced by Councillor Meekins; on a rental contract for a period of 5 years (£13.44 per week plus VAT), subject to the Clerk receiving, from the supplier, satisfactory responses to questions about repair and maintenance and insurance liability issues associated with the unit.

M10/19 Wisbech Market Place - enhancement scheme

Further to minute M7/19, members considered further the delivery of an enhancement scheme for Wisbech Market Place.

Further to part (3) of the decision at minute M7/19, the Clerk reported that he had met with the relevant Highways Engineer on 14 August 2019, for the purpose of making clear the Town Council's proposed traffic management proposals for Wisbech Market Place and seeking to ensure that the plan of the proposal includes all of the aspects within this council's application. The Clerk had also drawn the Highways Engineer's attention to part (2) of the decision at minute M7/19 (i.e. that the Local Highway Authority be requested to investigate the possibility/feasibility of providing additional disabled parking spaces in Wisbech Town Centre); the Clerk informed members that the officer had undertaken to pursue the Town Council's request.



As a result of that meeting, a revised plan, accompanied by an explanatory e-mail, had been received (and forwarded to the members of this committee) by the Clerk on 28 August 2019.

Members studied the revised plan produced by the Highways Engineer and considered how they would like to the Clerk to pursue the matter with the officer of the Local Highway Authority.

Members are of the opinion that most of the issues which had been raised at the time of considering the previous version of the plan had been addressed through the revised version; the only omissions being:

- the prohibition of vehicles along Little Church Street, to be controlled by bollards or barriers
- the introduction of a weight limit on Hill Street.

Although being mindful of the Highways Engineer’s comments regarding the lack of a turning circle for LGV/HCV at Church Terrace, members would still like to see the proposed entry gate to the Market Place to be located in such a position as to prevent vehicular access into Little Church Street. They feel that the drivers of such vehicles could be deterred from trying to access the Market Place via Church Terrace if the LHA were to use the type of advisory signage that is being suggested (instead of a weight limit) for Hill Street; using wording such as “unsuitable for HGVs between the hours of 10.00 am and 4.00 pm”.

Members commented that they would still like to see the introduction of weight limit (they are suggesting 7.5 tons) on Hill Street; they do not feel that a sign which says “unsuitable for HGVs” would (because it is only advisory in nature) act as a deterrent to such vehicles being driven along Hill Street. Although they acknowledge that it may be difficult to enforce, a weight restriction is a prohibition capable of enforcement and, hence, it might be taken more seriously by the drivers of HCVs.

The Clerk reminded members of the pre-planning advice which had been provided by Fenland District Council (FDC), as Local Planning Authority (LPA), in relation to the Town Council’s proposed enhancement scheme for Wisbech Market Place (minute M12/18 refers) and commented that, in summary, it is fair to say that the LPA is less than supportive of most of the elements of the proposed scheme. Consequently, the Clerk is currently seeking to arrange to meet with an appropriate officer (or officers) of the Local Planning Authority to ascertain from the LPA some parameters within which Wisbech Town Council would need work in producing a scheme which would be acceptable to the LPA in planning and conversation terms.

Members were reminded by the Clerk that there is a sum of £7,500 in the council’s budget for the financial year 2019/20 in relation to costs associated with the Wisbech Market Place enhancements scheme and that, at minute M4/19, this committee accepted the quotation from the Local Highway Authority, in the total sum of £3,726.20, for undertaking the necessary design work, road safety assessment, advertising the draft TRO etc in relation to the requested traffic management changes.

Members decided that the information reported be noted and that the Clerk would have a further dialogue with the LHA, to discuss the two issues outlined above, in relation to the updated traffic management plan and explanatory e-mail from the Local Highway Authority.

Meeting finished at 8.30 pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....