



## WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL

23 January 2017 – 7.30 pm

### MINUTES OF MEETING

**Present:** Councillor Tibbs, Chairman (and Town Mayor); Councillors Balsevics, Bucknor, Mrs Bucknor, Mrs Cox, Hodgson, Miss Hoy, Human, Lay, McLaren, Oliver, Miss Oliver, Rackley and Tierney.

**Apologies:** Councillors Brunton, Hill, Mrs MacRae and Schooling.

#### **118/16 Public participation – Heritage Lottery Fund**

A member of the public enquired as to whether he is correct in his belief that Wisbech Town Council had received monies from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

With the consent of the Mayor, Councillor Oliver responded. He explained that monies had been awarded to support a project to renovate dilapidated buildings on High Street; the monies had not been awarded to the Town Council; although supported by Wisbech Town Council, the lead agency in the project is Fenland District Council (a project officer commenced in post today); there should be further news very soon.

Members decided that the situation be noted

#### **119/16 Cambridgeshire Constabulary**

PCSOs Andy Bush, accompanied by PCSO Scott Clarke, attended the meeting to provide members with information on recent incidents of crime and disorder in Wisbech.

PCSO Bush informed the council that the Constabulary locally is focussing its efforts on addressing inconsiderate and illegal parking and street drinking in Wisbech.

With regard to the parking situation in Wisbech, PCSO Bush mentioned that the Constabulary had been working with the Fire Service to identify parking which is causing “blockages” (which would prevent access by a fire engine to an area).

PCSO Bush informed the council that tackling street drinking continues to a priority for the local policing team. He mentioned also that there had been an increase recently in the level of anti-social behaviour in certain areas within Wisbech and that the Constabulary is working with partner agencies (including Circle Roddons Housing and Fenland District Council), as necessary, to seek to address the issues.

PCSO Bush responded to members’ questions.

Councillor Mrs Cox referred to the joint working between Cambridgeshire Constabulary and the Fire Service locally and enquired as to whether PCSOs are empowered to issue penalty notices to motorists whose parking is causing a “blockage”. PCSO Bush responded in the affirmative and commented that PCSOs do monitor parking in the town centre and issue penalty notices as appropriate when resources allow.

Councillor Rackley asked whether the Constabulary could consider introducing policing which is focused upon the night-time economy (say, having an officer presence in the vicinity of public houses and night clubs at closing times), as a means of discouraging anti-social behaviour in the



town centre. The PCSO stated that he would refer the question to the local Policing Inspector, with a request that a response be provided to Wisbech Town Council.

Councillor Tierney referred to information that he had read on Facebook regarding an alleged mugging in Wisbech and enquired as to whether the allegation is correct. The PCSO stated that he would refer the question to the local Policing Inspector, with a request that a response be provided to Wisbech Town Council.

Councillor McLaren mentioned a campaign which is being operated by Lincolnshire Constabulary to tackle motorists' use of mobile telephones whilst driving and enquired as to whether Cambridgeshire Constabulary proposes to operate a similar campaign. The PCSO stated that he would refer the question to the Traffic Team, with a request that a response be provided to Wisbech Town Council.

Members decided that the information reported be noted.

## **120/16 Fenland District Council**

### **(1) Information**

The Clerk had been sent, by e-mail, information in respect of CCTV performance, Section 106 Planning Obligations details and the council's Environment newsletter and that he had forwarded, earlier today, the e-mails and attachments to all members of the council.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

### **(2) Public Space Protection Orders for dog control**

The Clerk informed members of the consultation exercise which is currently being undertaken by Fenland District Council (FDC) – operating between 4 and 31 January 2017 - in relation to its powers to control dog fouling and nuisance dogs.

The consultation exercise (which will include the production of information about the proposals, on-line and paper surveys, including face-to-face consultation with park users and dog walkers) is being undertaken because of Fenland District Council's need to adopt again, because a change in legal provisions relating to the Dog Control Orders which were adopted by FDC in 2012, powers to tackle issues relating to the poor management of dogs in public places. If the new powers are not adopted, FDC would have no power to tackle these environmental issues from October 2017.

Members noted that the proposals which are the subject of consultation do not introduce major changes to the current provisions but merely update where changes to play areas or open spaces had occurred over the past 4 years. For example, a new gated play provision which does not currently have a dog exclusion order in place. Also, the existing provisions made it possible for Town and Parish Councils to declare their own control orders. This provision no longer exists under these new powers; it was repealed by the new legislation.

Councillor Tierney commented that although he has no comments to make in relation to Public Space Orders for dog control, he would like to see the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order in relation to street drinking and he enquired of members as to whether Wisbech Town Council would be supportive of such a proposal.

In response to the comments of Councillor Tierney, Councillor Oliver mentioned that the existing Designated Public Places Order in relation to alcohol consumption outdoors in Wisbech has Grandfather Rights over Public Space Protection Orders (commencing in October 2017). He added that Fenland District Council would be undertaking a consultation exercise during the



summer of 2017 with regard to Public Space Protection Orders in relation to alcohol consumption outdoors. Councillor Oliver made the point that the need for such orders in particular locations would need to be supported by evidence of such; it would not be possible to simply introduce a “blanket” order across the whole of the town.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that Fenland District Council be informed that Wisbech Town Council has no comments to make in response to the current consultation exercise.

## **121/16 Cambridgeshire County Council**

### **(1) Bus shelter**

Further to minute 91/16 (3), the Clerk reported that the County Council is progressing the scheme to install a bus shelter at the Cromwell Road bus stop in front of the Tesco store; that Council also now plans to install a bench on the opposite side of the road.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

### **(2) Secondary Education Review**

Further to minute 91/16 (2), Councillor Miss Hoy, in her capacity as a member of Cambridgeshire Council, informed members of the outcome of the considerations of this matter by the County Council’s Children and Young People Committee on 17 January 2017.

This included the provision of a new secondary school in Wisbech on land to the east of the town, north and south of Sandy Lane or to the north-west of the town at Dowgate allotments (plus adjoining land), subject to completion of a more detailed feasibility study; a sum of £23 million would be provided in the County Council’s capital programme in 2019/20 for that purpose; the school would open in September 2020.

Councillor Miss Hoy reminded members that the County Council’s preferred site for a new secondary school in Wisbech had been land at Meadowgate Lane; this had not found support with the public and hence the identification by the County Council (following a consultation exercise) of other possible sites. She made the point that the County Council would now be developing its plans for the new school, which would involve discussions with the owners of the two sites now identified; one of those land owners is Wisbech Town Council.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs Bucknor, Councillor Miss Hoy confirmed that the new school would be an Academy.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

## **122/16 Minutes of 19 December 2016**

Members decided, on a proposal by Councillor Oliver, seconded by Councillor Human, that the minutes of the meeting of Wisbech Town Council held on 19 December 2016 be confirmed and signed.

### **123/16 Minutes of committees**

Members received, for information, the minutes of committee meetings held since the last meeting of the Town Council, as follows:

- (1) Planning and Community Infrastructure Committee – 19 December 2016



- (2) Policy and Resources Committee – 9 January 2017
- (3) Planning and Community Infrastructure Committee – 9 January 2017
- (4) Community Events and Festivals Committee – 10 January 2017.

Members decided that the contents of the minutes reported, including the decisions made by those committees, be noted.

### **124/16 Wisbech Castle**

Further to minute 109/16, Councillor Miss Hoy updated members on this project.

Councillor Miss Hoy informed members that further work had been undertaken on the development of a business case to enable a final document to be submitted to Cambridgeshire County Council, for consideration at 24 February 2017 meeting of its Assets and Investments Committee. This further work had “thrown-up” a number of issues which required consideration and evaluation. The business case would include a number of options for the operation and management of Wisbech Castle, which she explained briefly. She made the point that there are still many unknowns in this project – such as the repair works required (and the associated costs), the level of income which could be generated by use of the building and what would be the County Council’s stance in terms of requiring (or not, or at what level) a capital receipt for the building.

Councillor Miss Hoy made the point that, despite its claims, the County Council had not consulted with all “internal” services for interest in using Wisbech Castle; for example, Cambridgeshire Music Services, which had not been consulted, is interested in using part of the building as a Music Hub. The manager of that service has contributed to the content of the business case, as has the Director of the Ferry Project.

Councillor Miss Hoy commented that the intention is to submit an interim business case to the County Council, with a request to that council’s Assets and Investment Committee for an additional period of time to enable the case to be developed further. Approval of the request would afford Wisbech Town Council the opportunity to make application for Resilience monies from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the engagement of a consultant to help “drive forward” this project. She made the point that this council also requires further information from the County Council regarding the terms for disposal of Wisbech Castle (purchase (and at what cost), lease (and at what cost) or “free transfer” etc).

Councillor Mrs Bucknor enquired as to whether the members of Wisbech Town Council could have sight of the interim business case prior to submission to the County Council. She expressed the opinion that the members of Wisbech Town Council had seen no specific details of how this matter is being progressed; although Councillor Miss Hoy had provided a number of oral updates to meetings of Wisbech Town Council, Councillor Mrs Bucknor would like to see information in writing. She commented that Wisbech Town Council needs to be aware of what information is to be submitted on its behalf to the County Council.

In response to the comments of Councillor Mrs Bucknor, Councillor Miss Hoy made the commitment that the interim business case would be shared with the members of Wisbech Town Council prior to submission to the County Council.

Councillor Lay enquired as to whether it would be feasible to undertake works to Wisbech Castle to ensure that access by wheelchair-users would be possible. In response, Councillor Miss Hoy stated that appropriate works in that regard would be required. In addition, she asked that other members of the County Council lend their support Wisbech Town Council’s bid to acquire Wisbech Castle. Councillor Lay indicated that he would be prepared to take such action.



Councillor Miss Hoy stated that she would report to the next meeting of Wisbech Town Council (on 27 February 2017) on the outcome of the County Council's Assets and Investment Committee's consideration of this matter at its next meeting (on 24 February 2017).

Members decided that the information reported by Councillor Miss Hoy be noted.

### **125/16 Budget and Precept for 2017/18**

Members considered the Budget and level of Precept for the financial year 2017/18.

The Clerk presented to council a budget agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee on 9 January 2017 (minute R12/16 refers), a copy of which had been circulated, in advance of the meeting, to all members of the council.

The budget document provided to members detailed the council's budget for 2016/17 and the estimates of income and expenditure for 2017/18.

In presenting the proposed budget for 2017/18, the Clerk drew members' attention to the content of the minutes of 9 January 2017 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee and commented that the committee acknowledges that an increase in the Precept for 2017/18 is necessary, given the decisions made at both minutes R9/16 and R12/16.

The Clerk mentioned that approval of the proposed budget for 2017/18 would require an increase in the 2016/17 Precept of £235,554 (by £29,820) to £265,374 for 2017/18. He added that increasing the total Precept for Wisbech Town Council to £265,374 equates to the Precept for a Band D property of £43.16 for the financial year 2017/18; an annual increase of £4.06 (or 10.4%) to the 2016/17 figure. The additional cost to the occupiers of a Band D equivalent property would be approximately 7.8 pence per week. More than half of the properties in Wisbech are in Council Band A; those households would face an increase of 5.2 pence per week.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor enquired as to whether the council possesses a sufficient level of financial reserves and, if not, whether it ought to be seeking to increase the level of general reserves through future years' Precepts. In response, the Clerk reminded members of the comments that he had made at 9 January 2017 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee (minute R12/16 refers) that the council's general reserves at the end of the current financial year are anticipated to be at a level which accords with the recommendation contained in the Practitioners' Guide to Local Council Governance (albeit that the amount is towards the lower end of the recommended level).

Councillor Mrs Bucknor referred also to a commitment which had been given by the Clerk at 9 January 2017 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee (minute R10/16 refers) with regard to the net cost to the council of the Christmas Lights Extravaganza event and she enquired as to whether this information is available yet. In response, the Clerk stated that the necessary work is in hand and that the information would be provided to members in due course.

The Clerk responded to members' questions in relation to the draft budget for 2017/18.

Members decided, unanimously, on a proposal by Councillor Oliver, seconded by Councillor Tierney, that

- (1) the estimates of income and expenditure for 2017/18 be noted and approved as the basis of the Town Council's budget for 2017/18;
- (2) being mindful of the current economic circumstances, the Town Council's financial position and its desire to be able to continue to meet the needs of the community, the level of Precept for 2017/18 be set at £265,374.00.



(Councillors Balsevics, Bucknor, Mrs Bucknor, Mrs Cox, Hodgson, Miss Hoy, Human, Lay, McLaren, Oliver, Miss Oliver, Rackley, Tibbs and Tierney declared their respective pecuniary interest in the setting of the Town Council Precept, by virtue of having a beneficial interest in a domestic dwelling within the town, but had been granted a dispensation to speak and vote in this matter)

### **126/16 Mayor's Report**

The Mayor informed members of the civic events that he had attended and activities in which he had participated since the last meeting of Wisbech Town Council.

The Mayor informed members that last month, when compared to the previous month (which had included the "run up" to Christmas), had been relatively "quiet"; however, he had attended a number of events since the last meeting of the council, including:

- visits on Christmas Day to a number of local care homes; these being Rose Lodge, Adina Court, Glennfield House, Orchard House, Lyncroft Care Home and Hickathrift House. The Mayor commented that making those visits on that day had been thoroughly enjoyable and he had been welcomed very warmly at each of the care homes
- the AGM of the Wisbech Committee for Children's Charities; he had enjoyed chairing that meeting
- the 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party of a Wisbech resident.

The Mayor commented that there are numerous events and activities to which he had been invited in 2017.

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

### **127/16 Leader of the Council's report**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Oliver, informed members that

- Wisbech Town Hall had been subject to an inspection by the local Fire Protection Officer (of the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service) in mid-December 2016. That officer is satisfied that Wisbech Town Council is taking all appropriate measures to protect the building, its contents and those persons who would be occupying the building as employees, members of the council or as visitors. The Fire Protection Officer had made two recommendations as a result of the inspection; these are for the council to: review the current fire safety risk assessment, to ensure that it remains "fit for purpose"; arrange the delivery of "refresher" fire safety training for staff.

The Clerk has booked places for two members of Wisbech Town Council staff on the next Fire Safety for Businesses seminar which is scheduled to take place in the town (at Wisbech Fire Station on 28 March 2017). In addition, the Clerk would be arranging a fire drill at the Town Hall on an occasion when persons other than employees only would be in the building.

- the first (of two) part of this council's Internal Audit (which focused upon procedural processes) had been undertaken and the council had been given a "clean bill of health".

Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked Councillor Oliver's opinion regarding comments made recently by the Member of Parliament in connection with activities of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). In response, Councillor Oliver commented that the MP has concerns that Fenland is not being served well by the LEP and that he is, consequently, taking action to seek to address the situation. Councillor Oliver agreed to the suggestion of Councillor Mrs Bucknor that he would both report to Wisbech Town Council on the outcome of the MP's "campaign" and he would seek to ensure that Fenland District Council takes a proactive role in the matter.



Councillor Mrs Bucknor enquired as to whether it would be made known, via publicity and notices, to prevent theft of the material, that the new roofing to the bandstand at Wisbech Park is not manufactured from lead. Councillor Oliver commented that Fenland District Council would be producing appropriate publicity in advance of the bandstand re-opening.

Members decided that the comments of the Leader of the Council be noted.

### **128/16 Questions to the Leader of the Council**

Members considered a proposal from Councillor Lay that an item be placed on the agenda for all future meetings of Wisbech Town Council under which members of the council are afforded the opportunity to ask questions of the Leader of the Council. In speaking in support of his proposal, Councillor Lay mentioned his awareness that it would be unlawful to discuss a matter at a meeting of the council or its committees in the absence of such an item of business on the agenda for the meeting and he considers that there would be benefit in providing members with the opportunity to seek information from the Leader of the Council and to be able to request that certain matters be examined by that councillor.

Councillor Oliver commented that he has no issue with regard to such a proposal but questioned the necessity for such an agenda item, given the opportunity which exists for members to ask the Clerk, as the Council's Proper Officer, any question or to request information at any time (rather than raise such matters with the Leader at a meeting of Wisbech Town Council). He suggested that, if the proposal were to be implemented, any questions to the Leader should be submitted in writing to the Clerk, for forwarding to the Leader of the Council, no less than five clear working days prior to the date of the meeting at which the answer would be expected.

Councillor Tierney stated that he does not support Councillor Lay's proposal, as this process could have the effect of introducing "any other business" to the meeting agenda; a situation which would be unlawful. He expressed the opinion that a more appropriate approach would be to ask questions of committee chairmen regarding the work of their respective committee. Councillor Tierney commented that there are already many means by which members are able to ask questions of anyone and about any matter; Introducing an agenda item for questioning of the Leader would, in his opinion, serve no useful purpose.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor expressed the opinion that it is always useful to be able to receive updates on issues affecting Wisbech, commenting that there is no other forum available to members currently to achieve that.

Members decided, on a proposal by Councillor Lay, seconded by Councillor Bucknor, that an item be placed on the agenda for all future meetings of Wisbech Town Council under which members of the council are afforded the opportunity to ask questions of the Leader of the Council; any questions to the Leader to be submitted in writing to the Clerk, for forwarding to the Leader of the Council, no less than five clear working days prior to the date of the meeting at which the answer would be expected.

### **129/15 Reports from representatives on outside bodies**

Councillor Hodgson informed members that the 2017 AGM of the Wisbech/Arles Twinning Association would take place on 15 February (in the Council Chamber at Wisbech Town Hall).

Councillor Human informed members that, further to minute 87/15, the Hudson Indoor Bowls Club is in the process of renewing its lease (for its second year of operation) with Fenland District Council. He added that the club is operating well financially; this is due in part to successful fundraising activities.



Councillor Oliver mentioned that the provisional date for the next meeting of High Street Consultative Group is 13 February 2017; an officer to lead on the delivery of this project (to engage with property owners etc) had been appointed recently and would be in attendance at that meeting.

Councillor Oliver mentioned also that, further to minute 91/16 (4), the first meeting of the Wisbech Access Strategy Steering Group had taken place on 20 January 2017, at which the group members had discussed the purpose of the group, the rationale for the access strategy and a communications strategy for the project. He informed members that the next meeting of the group is scheduled for 7 February 2017 and that he would update the council as the project develops.

Members decided that the information reported be noted.

**13016 Correspondence**

**Wisbech in Bloom**

The Clerk read to members a letter from the Wisbech in Bloom group, explaining how it allocated the financial support awarded to the group in 2016 (minute R13/15 refers).

The Clerk undertook to forward a copy of the letter to any members of the council who so wish.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that the Wisbech in Bloom group be informed that it would receive in 2017 the same level of grant funding from Wisbech Town Council in 2016.

**131/16 Noticeboard/Information update**

The Clerk informed members that there are currently no such items in need of reporting to council.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

**132/16 Date of next meeting**

Members were reminded that the next meeting of Wisbech Town Council is scheduled for 27 February 2017, to commence at 7.30 pm, at the offices of Wisbech Town Council.

**Meeting finished at 8.35 pm.**

Signed .....

Date .....