



WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL

10 August 2020 – 7.30 pm (held using the Zoom video conferencing system)

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: Councillor Balsevics, Chairman; Councillors Miss Hoy, Human, Ketteringham, Lynn, Maul, Meekins, Oliver, Patrick, Mrs Pehlivanova, Prest, Rackley, Tibbs, Tierney, Topgood and Mrs Wallwork

Apologies: Councillors Hill and Wing.

23/20 Public participation: Anti-social behaviour at Wisbech Park junction, back of Verdun Road and Bowthorpe Road, Wisbech

The Clerk read to members a letter from a resident of Bowthorpe Road, Wisbech (who is a former member of Wisbech Town Council) regarding anti-social behaviour at Wisbech Park junction, back of Verdun Road and Bowthorpe Road, Wisbech. The resident is calling for the installation of a CCTV camera in the area as a means of deterring the anti-social behaviour in that area.

In the letter, the resident makes reference to a meeting of local residents which took place on 3 August 2020, for the purpose of enabling residents to express their views and concerns regarding the on-going problems of anti-social behavior; approximately 25 residents had attended the meeting, as did Councillor Lynn and a Police Community Support Officer.

The resident makes the point, in her letter, that residents of that this area had been subjected to anti-social behavior for a number of years. She mentions that she had expressed concerns regarding this situation when she had been a member of Wisbech Town Council. The resident makes the point that when incidents are reported and, consequently, Police do patrol the site, the groups of youths move on to another area; however, when the Police patrols cease, the anti-social behavior returns.

In the letter, the resident mentions efforts of Councillor Tierney In 2017 and the Police and Crime Panel in 2018 to try to address this problem.

The resident details, within her letter, the types of some of anti-social behavior to which local residents are subjected, the impact that it has upon them and the actions which they have taken to try to enlist the support of agencies to help alleviate the situation.

Attached to the letter from the resident were statements from other residents. The Clerk had circulated the letter and its attachments to members in advance of the meeting.

In the letter, the resident expresses the opinion that the area concerned is a prime candidate for the installation of a CCTV camera to help put an end to these on-going problems. The residents urge Wisbech Town Council to support their case.

Councillor Tierney commented that the situation described by the resident had existed for a number of years and that he had tried to assist residents through his reporting of incidents to the Police; the Police had taken action but their resources are limited.

Councillor Mrs Wallwork concurred with the comments made by Councillor Tierney. She mentioned that, at the invitation of Councillor Lynn, she had visited that area and had witnessed a gathering of youths.



Councillor Mrs Wallwork informed members that officers of the Constabulary and Fenland District Council would be meeting to discuss what actions could be taken to address the situation; an officer of the District Council's CCTV service would be visiting the area, although she is of the opinion that the installation of a CCTV camera would not be the solution to this problem. She informed members that the multi-agency Problem Solving Group would be working hard to identify the young people who are behaving in an anti-social manner in that area. She undertook to keep the council informed of developments in this matter.

Councillor Lynn, who gave details of the residents' meeting that he had attended on 3 August 2020, commented that he has sympathy for the plight of residents. He commented also that the Police do care about this matter; however, everyone needs to be realistic as to what can be achieved.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported and members' comments thereon be noted;
- (2) the Clerk would forward to the local Policing Inspector the resident's letter and its attachments, requesting that the Constabulary gives serious consideration to tackling this matter (the Clerk would also inform the Inspector that the multi-agency Problem Solving Group would be considering what could be done to address the anti-social behaviour issues in this part of Wisbech).

24/20 Wisbech Town Cricket and Hockey Club

Members received a presentation from Tony Bass and Jane Peggs in relation to the history of the Wisbech Town Cricket and Hockey Club and its ambitions for the future. Mr Bass explained that he had been engaged by the club to help it "move forward" and commented that the purpose of the presentation is two-fold; to "introduce" the club to the council and explore the possibility of securing financial assistance from the council.

Mr Bass made reference to a report, produced by Jane Peggs and him (entitled "Re-building Our Future"), which had been circulated to members, by the Clerk, in advance of the meeting.

Mr Bass detailed the history of the club, which had been existence since 1962. The current pavilion was built in 1961 and had subsequently been extended in 1970. The club has now reached the point where significant investment is needed (not only to the pavilion but also the artificial pitch) to ensure that hockey and cricket facilities are able to meet modern standards and provide the club with the opportunity to secure its long-term future.

The council was informed by Mr Bass of why the club is important. It currently has a joint playing membership in excess of 300 and the club's activities are supported by dedicated volunteers. The club already reaches into the wider community, particularly to schools (because of the importance of children engaging in physical activity) and considers that it has more to offer to the wider community. Mr Bass made reference to the coaching activities that the club provides to the Peckover Academy and the Thomas Clarkson Academy.

Mr Bass explained the fundraising activities which had been undertaken by the club since 2011; this includes a legacy of £46,000 left by a long-term member, £150,000 raised directly by the club and a further £150,000 pledged from the Hudson Foundation.

The club's Pitch Management Committee and the club are now working proactively to bring the artificial pitch back into permanent use. It is estimated that the cost of replacing the pitch would be between £300,000 and £400,000; subject to funding being available, the pitch could be brought back



into use by mid-2021. A recent application to the County Council's Communities Capital Fund had been unsuccessful. A number of funding applications are currently being developed.

Over recent months, the club and the pitch committee have been working collaboratively to develop a realistic and achievable plan that would secure and improve the facilities at the Harecroft Road site. The new pitch is the priority but also improving the existing pavilion to enable wider community use is an essential short-term requirement (with significant refurbishment or replacement in the longer-term).

Mr Bass informed the council of some of the club's partners; they include the District Council's Active Fenland team. He mentioned that the club acknowledges that it needs to raise its profile within the town and to dispel any perception that it exists only for the benefit of its members; the ambition is to develop a welcoming, family-friendly club, with modern facilities, a well-kept, healthy outdoor environment with an "open to all" philosophy.

The council was informed by Mr Bass that the club wishes to engage more proactively with Wisbech Town Council, as its potential contribution to the council's work within the town. In addition, the club would like to understand how it could contribute directly to the council's work, in particular by opening-up the facilities (indoors and outdoors) to other community groups and activities, as well as taking sport into the wider community and areas of need – to make the club a genuine community facility.

Mr Bass mentioned that fundraising remains a key requirement to achieving the club's plans. The club would be submitting very shortly – deadline is 26 August 2020 – an application to the Mick George Community Fund for £50,000 to support the club's improvement plans. It may also submit a similar application later to Amey Cespa. To access these types of funds – which are made possible because of landfill tax credits – applicants are required to have a Third Party Contribution at the level of 11% (i.e. £5,500 for a £50,000 application). Mr Bass is asking, on behalf of the club, whether Wisbech Town Council would provide that funding at this time and whether it would be open to further similar requests in the future.

Mr Bass responded to members' questions.

Councillor Lynn commented that he is keen to support all sporting activities in Wisbech and would be happy to support the request for £5,500 at this time; he would, however, be concerned about making any commitment to future funding requests.

In response to a question from Councillor Meekins as to whether the club would be improving the security of the pitch to prevent vandalism, Mr Bass commented that secure fencing would be installed.

Councillor Human enquired as to whether the club had identified any potential sources of funding other than Wisbech Town Council. In response, Mr Bass mentioned that the club does possess some funding for improvement of the pavilion but it would utilise those funds if necessary for replacement of the pitch; there are also some potential personal donors. It is, however, necessary to have a "recognised" Third Party Contributor (such as a local council) to be able to access funding which is available through landfill tax credits.

Councillor Mrs Wallwork expressed the opinion that Mr Bass had produced an excellent report and she expressed the hope that the work being undertaken at Peckover Academy could be replicated at other primary schools. Mr Bass commented that the club had begun its work with schools at Peckover as it is on the club's "door step" and it had "lost" outdoor space; the next "target" school is the Orchards Academy; the club focuses its attention upon those schools which have the greatest need for support. He added that the club would expand its coaching works as far as resources would allow.



Members decided, on the proposal of Councillor Oliver, seconded by Councillor Meekins, that Wisbech Town Council is supportive of the proposal to make the Wisbech Town Cricket and Hockey Club a genuine community facility and the council acknowledges that without investment in the club's facilities, the potential in that regard would be restricted. Therefore, Wisbech Town Council is happy to be a Third Party Contributor in relation to the club's application (for £50,000) to the Mick George Community Fund to support delivery of the facilities improvement plan. The council, in making its decision, understands that the level of Third Party Contribution would be 11% of the amount of funding sought (i.e. £5,500).

25/20 Fenland District Council

(1) Information

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

Members decided that the situation be noted.

(2) Fenland Local Plan 2019 - 2040

Further to minute 162/19, members considered the opportunity now being offered by Fenland District Council (FDC), as the Local Planning Authority, to submit additional potential development sites in Wisbech, as part of the process of producing a new Fenland Local Plan for the period 2019 – 2040.

The Clerk reminded members – he had circulated the correspondence from FDC to members in advance of the meeting – of how this second call for possible sites had transpired.

Members were informed by the Clerk that consultation on the draft Local Plan would take place in February 2021.

Members decided that Wisbech Town Council had no new sites to suggest to the Local Planning Authority (LPA). However, they acknowledge that the opportunity exists for individual members to make suggestions to the LPA if they so wish.

(3) Dog Public Space Protection Order

Further to minute 11/20 (2), members considered the opportunity to submit a further response to Fenland District Council's consultation exercise in relation to review of the Dog Public Space Protection Order (PSPO).

The Clerk informed members that the opportunity to submit a further response is because, in response to the previous consultation exercise, the inclusion of an additional site had been requested; that being a church yard at Fridaybridge (to be added to the locations where dogs must be on leads).

As the relevant legislation does not allow for changes to be made as part of the renewal of a PSPO, it has been necessary for the District Council to apply for a new Order; the new PSPO would retain the same restrictions in the same locations as in the previous Order.

Members are of the opinion that the inclusion of this additional location within the Dog Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) has no affect upon the views of this council in relation to the PSPO.



Members decided that Fenland District Council be informed that Wisbech Town Council's response to the previous consultation exercise in respect of this matter (minute 11/20 (2) refers) – i.e. that supports continuation of the protections afforded by the Dog Public Spaces Protection Order for a further 3 years period - is unchanged.

(4) Applications to the County Council's Communities Capital Fund

Further to minute 16/20 (3) - at which Wisbech Town Council decided to pledge match funding of £5,000 towards each of the two Fenland District Council (FDC) applications to the County Council's Communities Capital Fund (making £10,000 in total) - members considered a request from FDC for the Town Council to allocate the whole of that £10,000 to the application for one of the projects.

Members were reminded by the Clerk that one of the applications which had been submitted by Fenland District Council (FDC) for funding from Cambridgeshire County Council's Communities Capital Fund is for replacement of the redundant changing rooms at Wisbech Park with a new multi-purpose community building and the other is for a water play facility at Wisbech Park.

The reason for the request from the District Council is that it had been informed by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) that only one of the two FDC applications in respect of Wisbech Park would be recommended by CCC's member panel to its Communities and Partnership Committee (scheduled to meet on 3 September 2020) for approval.

It had also been made known to FDC that the member panel at the County Council is keen for the match funding pledged in respect of the application for a water play facility to be added to the match funding offered in respect of the application for funding replacement of the redundant changing rooms at Wisbech Park with a new multi-purpose community building; to make a total of £20,000 (£10,000 from Fenland District Council and £10,000 from Wisbech Town Council).

Councillor Tierney expressed his disappointment that only one of the two applications from Fenland District Council is being supported by the County Council and mentioned that Councillor Miss Hoy and he are investigating another potential source of funding for the other project.

Councillor Miss Hoy expressed her opinion that the Town Council should support the District Council's current request. She commented that the Town Council had already agreed (at minute 16/20 (3) to pledge £10,000 in total as match funding for Fenland District Council's applications and, therefore, she would be happy to agree to the District Council's request.

Councillor Meekins expressed the hope that the County Council may operate a similar funding opportunity in future years.

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Miss Hoy, seconded by Councillor Tierney, that the whole £10,000 allocated at minute 16/20 (3) be pledged as match funding from Wisbech Town Council towards the project to replace the redundant changing rooms at Wisbech Park with a new multi-purpose community building.

(5) Wisbech Statute Fair

The Clerk informed members that, as the Chapel Road car park is being used on some days of the week as the site for Covid-19 testing arrangements and given the fact that Fenland District Council has concerns as to how the fair could operate (with large numbers of people "milling about" in an uncontrolled manner) in a Covid-19 compliant manner, the District Council is



proposing that there would be no Statute Fair in Wisbech in 2020. That council is, however, keen to hear the views of Wisbech Town Council regarding that proposal.

Councillor Oliver expressed the opinion, which was shared by other members, that it is disappointing that there would be no Statute Fair in Wisbech this year but the District Council's proposal is understandable.

Members decided that the situation be noted and that Fenland District Council be informed that Wisbech Town Council is disappointed that there would be no Statute Fair in Wisbech this year but it understands the District Council's stance in this matter.

26/20 Cambridgeshire County Council

(1) Communities Capital Fund

Further to minute 17/20 (1), the Clerk informed members that, at the meeting of the County Council's Communities and Partnerships Committee on 6 August 2020, Wisbech Town Council's application to the Communities Capital Fund for £150,000 towards the cost of delivering the proposed Wisbech Market Place enhancement scheme had been approved.

Members were very pleased at the successful outcome of the application process.

Councillor Maul expressed his thanks to Councillor Lynn, the Chairman of the Wisbech Market Place Management Committee, and the Clerk to the Council for their significant efforts in this matter. In response, Councillor Lynn thanked Councillor Maul for his comment and made the point that the Councillor Miss Hoy (Leader of the Council), the Clerk to the Council and he had worked well as a team to progress the Wisbech Market Place enhancement scheme and he expressed the opinion that, when delivered, the scheme would be of significant benefit to Wisbech.

Members decided that the information reported by the Clerk and the comments made by members be noted.

(2) Local Highway Improvement schemes 2021/22

Further to minute 12/20 (2), the Clerk informed members that the closing date for applications for 2021/22 Local Highway Improvement (LHI) schemes had now been agreed by the County Council; it would be 27 September 2020. Following that date, feasibility studies would be undertaken by officers of the Local Highway Authority in relation to all of the applications submitted across Cambridgeshire, ready for consideration by the area panels during February and March 2021.

Members were reminded by the Clerk that the council had submitted two applications for Local Highway Improvement schemes for delivery during the financial year 2021/22; those being for:

- the introduction of "all-time" parking restrictions (i.e. double yellow lines) at the junction of New Drove and Leach Close, Wisbech (minute 12/20 (2) refers);
- the introduction of a scheme which would control the speed at which motorists are able to travel along Tinkers Drove, Wisbech (minute 17/20 (2) refers).

Members decided that the situation be noted.



(3) Proposed incinerator for Wisbech

Further to minute 17/20 (3), Councillor Tierney informed members the Motion of opposition to the proposed incinerator for Wisbech had now been supported by Cambridgeshire County Council; that means that all three tiers of local government which deliver services to the people of Wisbech are united in their opposition to this proposal.

Members decided that the information reported by Councillor Tierney be noted.

27/20 Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 6 July 2020

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Prest, seconded by Councillor Human, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of 6 July 2020 be confirmed, for signature by the Chairman when possible.

28/20 Appointment of committees

Members reviewed the membership of the council's committees, in the light of operational issues since the current appointment arrangements were put in place (in May 2019; to be effective from the time of the new (post-elections 2019)) council and the changes in the political make-up of the Town Council since that time.

The Clerk had prepared, and had circulated to members in advance of the meeting, a detailed report on this matter.

Members were reminded by the Clerk that in May 2019 (at minute 12/19) the number of seats on each of the council's seven service committees had been reduced from nine to seven; the rationale for that change being to reduce the burden upon councillors, so that they could be freed-up to spend time on ward issues and community initiatives/projects; also, to have 50% of the Council membership serving on each committee was considered to be higher than necessary.

At minute 12/19 members had considered it appropriate to continue to appoint committees using the principles of political proportionality – this arrangement had been introduced in April 2015 (minute 186/15 refers); under that arrangement, seats are allocated to political groups (a political group constitutes two councillors or more, provided that a notice to that effect has been served upon the Council's Proper Officer by the Leader of that Group).

The Clerk reminded members that, currently, the Council has only one political group; that is a Conservative Group, which in May 2019 had consisted of 15 councillors. The other 3 members of the Council at that time, elected as Independent councillors, had not formed a political group and have not done so since. This meant that there was no requirement for those three councillors to be allocated seats on any of the council's committees. It had been agreed, however (at minute 12/19), that seats be offered to Independent councillors.

Members were reminded by the Clerk that council had decided (at minute 12/19) that Standing Order number 44 be amended to read "*Committees of Wisbech Town Council shall comprise a maximum of seven members of the council, to be allocated on the basis of political proportionality, the decision as to which committees councillors would serve upon shall be made by the Council. In the event that a councillor declines the committee seat(s) allocated to him/her by the Council, the re-allocation of that seat (or seats) will be to the controlling group, which will be undertaken by the Council*".

The Clerk drew to members' attention the fact that there is no legal requirement for committees of Town and Parish Councils to be appointed on the basis of political proportionality; that requirement



applies only to Principal Authorities (i.e. District/Borough Councils, County Councils and Unitary Authorities); it was simply a practice that the Council had decided, at minute 186/15, to adopt.

Members are aware that a number of committee seats which had been allocated to Independent members of Wisbech Town Council in May 2019 had been either declined at that time or had subsequently been the subject of resignation of such appointment during the municipal year 2019/20.

The Clerk reminded members that between May 2019 and May 2020, one member of the Conservative group had been removed as a member of that group, reducing the membership from 15 to 14 councillors and increasing the number of “other” councillors to 4.

Committees of the council were appointed for the current municipal year (2020/21) on 18 May 2020 (minute 8/20 refers). Those appointments were based upon the political proportionality at the time of commencement of that meeting (i.e. 14 councillors being members of the Conservative group and there being 4 “other” councillors). However, during that meeting, a further member of the Conservative group on the council decided to leave the group. This means that the council now has a Conservative group of 13 members and there are 5 other councillors.

If the allocation of seats on committees were applied following the “letter of the law” in relation to the political proportionality “rules”, all of the seats on the council’s committees would be allocated to the members of the Conservative group only.

The Clerk reminded members of the current allocation of members to seats on committees.

The proposal now is for the maximum number of members serving on a committee to remain at seven but the membership of committees to no longer be appointed on the basis of political proportionality. However, the Conservative group on the council still wishes, currently, to see representation from non-Conservative councillors on committees. Consequently, one seat per committee would be made available to councillors who are not members of the Conservative group.

Under the revised arrangements, members of the Conservative group would be allocated 6 seats on each committee and the “other” members would be allocated 1 seat. It would be a matter for the “other” councillors to agree collectively which councillor would serve upon which committee and for that agreement to be presented to Council for approval. In the event that there is insufficient take-up of the seats made available to the “other” councillors, the re-allocation of that seat (or seats) would be to the controlling (i.e. Conservative) group on the council.

The Clerk responded to members’ questions.

Councillor Patrick expressed the hope if there were to be a change in the political make-up the council, the possibility of re-introducing a process whereby committees were appointed on the basis of political proportionality could be considered. In response, Councillor Tierney commented that such consideration would be for a future council to decide.

A request from Councillor Meekins, to provide members with more time to consider this matter, was not supported by other councillors.

Councillor Miss Hoy made the point that the proposed change has little impact upon the number of seats available to non-Conservative councillors; a number of seats on committees had been offered to Independent councillors during the period of the current council but these had been declined.

Councillor Maul stated his concurrence with the comments made by Councillor Miss Hoy and expressed the opinion that there is no need to defer a decision on this matter. He commented that there is only one political group on the council – therefore, making redundant the allocation of



committee seats on the basis of political proportionality – and that he is happy to support the recommendations within the Clerk's report.

Members decided, on the proposal of Councillor Miss Hoy, seconded by Councillor Tibbs, that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) the changes proposed to the allocation of seats on the council's committees be adopted;
- (3) members be appointed to committees on the basis of the proposed seats allocations (currently, 6 Conservative councillors and one other councillor on each of the committees of the Council);
- (4) the wording of Standing Order 44 be amended appropriately by the Clerk, to comply with the changes to the council's arrangements for the appointment of its committees.

29/20 Delegated Power

Further to minute 19/20, members considered whether the power which had, in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic situation, been delegated to the Clerk (which took effect from 24 March 2020) still remains necessary.

Given that the law allows meetings to be held virtually (Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 refers), members considered whether the power which had been delegated to the Clerk is still necessary. However, because of a number of continuing operational uncertainties, they feel that it may be best for it to continue to remain for the time being but be reviewed at the next meeting of the council.

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Meekins, seconded by Councillor Prest, that the power which had been delegated to the Clerk (on 24 March 2020) be continued at this time, with further continuance being reviewed at the next meeting of Wisbech Town Council.

30/20 Wisbech Town Council's accounts and AGAR for 2019/20

Further to minute 20/20, the Clerk (and RFO) informed members that it had not proven possible for officers to complete all of processes associated with completion the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2019/20 documentation in time for "sign-off" by members at this meeting of the council.

The Clerk (and RFO), who had circulated the relevant sections of the AGAR document with supporting information to members in advance of the meeting, reminded members that there are two sections which require "sign-off"; the Annual Governance Statement needs to be agreed first, followed by the Accounting Statements. He informed members that the Annual Governance Statement is ready for "sign-off" at this meeting but further work is required in relation to completion of the Accounting Statements.

Members were informed by the Clerk that officers are experiencing some issues with the council's new accountancy software and, as a result, he is not confident at this time of the accuracy of the financial data that it had produced in relation to the council's 2019/20 accounts; he gave one example to demonstrate the point that he had made.

The Clerk mentioned that he had discussed this matter with the Leader of the Council, who had suggested that the Clerk (and RFO) asks the council to consider only the Annual Governance Statement at this meeting and allow more time for officers to investigate the issues with accountancy



system (having a dialogue with the software supplier if necessary), with the Accounting Statements being “signed-off” at the next meeting of Wisbech Town Council (date to be agreed).

The Clerk (and RFO) responded to members’ questions in relation to both the content of the documentation which had been provided to council and the oral report that he had given.

Members decided, on the proposal of Councillor Human, seconded by Councillor Maul, that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk (and RFO) be noted;
- (2) the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 be approved and signed by the Chairman when possible;
- (3) consideration of the Accounting Statements 2019/20 be deferred to the next meeting of Wisbech Town Council (date to be agreed).

31/20 Clerk’s report

The Clerk reported to members on: updates in relation to council projects/initiatives; correspondence received which would be of interest to councillors; advance notice of events/activities etc; the minutes of meetings of committees held since the last meeting of the council:

Delegated decisions

Since the time of the delegated powers coming into effect, on 24 March 2020, a number of decisions have been made by the Clerk (in liaison with, at least, the Leader of the Council and the relevant Committee Chairman). In addition to those reported to the last meeting of Wisbech Town Council, there have been:

- Financial support towards the cost of Boxes of Rainbows (boxes containing craft activities) for 450 families in Wisbech (£4,500)
- Accepting a quotation for turfing works (to the rear garden) at Wisbech Castle (£1,800)
- Accepting quotations for maintenance and improvement works at Wisbech Castle (approximately £4,000 plus materials).

Members decided that the decisions made by the Clerk under the delegated power be noted.

Projects and service delivery

Assistance for the vulnerable

As reported at the last meeting of the Town Council (minute 21/20 refers), a small number of volunteers had been working alongside three councillors for the last few months to offer assistance with shopping and the collection of medicines etc and that this had culminated in a thank-you marketing video being produced by council officers to all involved. Generally, this arrangement has now ceased, given that the shielding requirement finished on 1 August 2020.

Acts of Kindness

The council is still working on an Acts of Kindness campaign, partnered by the Fenland Citizen newspaper. The original intention was that the results of the campaign would see names and reasons for nominations and, where possible, a photograph of the nominee in a montage video and poster. However, the council had received names and reasons for nominations but without images. A draft Acts of Kindness video film has been produced, for “sign-off” by the members of the Community Events and Festivals Committee.



Wisbech Market

Wisbech Market has seen various changes due to the Covid-19 lockdown – initially food stalls only were allowed to trade during “lockdown” but now all stalls have been allowed to return. Food vendors are, once again, been allowed to provide seating for their customers. To address the need to achieve Covid-19 compliance, crowd control barriers with 2m distancing guidance, by way of barrier ponchos in high-vis yellow, are used; one-way pedestrian routes had been advertised widely by council staff and are marked through the use of pavement stickers.

The council continues to receive interest from additional vendors, mainly food, due to an enhanced social media campaign drawing attention to the merits of a café culture atmosphere within the Market Place, as well as the “safer” experience of shopping in the open air.

Incoming vendors include a Build your own Waffle station and a Cambridge-based vendor wishing to expand his business has chosen Wisbech as the ideal place. This vendor will be trading 7 days per week on a licensed basis, selling pork and chicken skewers wraps with a variety of sauces. The vendors who are selling Bulgarian food, who have been trading for the last couple of weeks or so have increased their commitment to 5 days per week.

Sunday trading, including car boot activity, returned to Wisbech Market Place on 5 July 2020 and is operating successfully.

Market Place enhancements

At the last meeting of the council, members had been informed that Wisbech Town Council had been invited to submit a full application (following the submission initially of an Expression of Interest) to the County Council’s Communities Capital Fund. The application was for £150,000, towards a projected scheme cost of £200,000.

The application was considered by the County Council’s Communities and Partnerships Committee on 6 August 2020 and the Town Council’s application was approved.

As was reported to the last meeting (at minute 21/20), a Design Engineer had been engaged to produce some options for a scheme for enhancement of the Market Place (to include paving, water feature, benches etc). The Leader of the Council and the Clerk – the Chairman of the Wisbech Market Place Management Committee had been unable to attend – met on 10 August 2020 with the Design Engineer to discuss the progression of a scheme. As a result of these discussions, and in the knowledge that funding is now available, a meeting of the Wisbech Market Place Management Committee has been arranged for 17 August 2020.

With regard to the “pedestrianisation” of the Market Place area, the Clerk is still awaiting to hear from officers of the Policy and Regulation Team at Cambridgeshire County Council as to when the public consultation exercise in relation to a draft Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), which, if approved, would deliver the “pedestrianisation”, will take place.

Allotments

With social marketing campaigns, the take-up of allotments has increased significantly and there is now a waiting list for Waterlees; the other allotments sites are seeing a high level of applications. It is hoped that the council can promote its allotments even further by way of water harvesting guidance, seasonal ‘to do’ tasks and the promotion of allotment associations. Officers are making enquiries of Anglian Water regarding the cost of installing water points to two allotment sites where



rain harvesting is more difficult; the implementation of such a facility would be dependent upon agreement by the Assets Management Committee.

Communications

The Town Council's social media continues to create a high level presence across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. The ambition is to make Wisbech Town Council website and associated social media streams the "go to" place for authoritative guidance and support.

The Wisbech App was launched in early June and has been a huge success, with an increase from 227 sign-ups a month ago to 272 now. The photo entry competition for July is awaiting announcement of the winning image, which will be used across social media and the council's website. It is proposed that the annual winning entry will be used for the front cover of the Town Guide.

Community events and festivals

In the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the WisBEACH Day event, the Wisbech Rock Festival and the Halloween party have been cancelled. Government guidance in relation to social distancing and mass gatherings continues to be monitored in terms of its impact upon future events in Wisbech.

At this stage, we are currently working on the basis that the Remembrance Sunday, Christmas Lights Switch-on and the Christmas Fayre events will be taking place and the first meeting with the Chairman of the Wisbech Branch of the Royal British Legion and a variety of other participants (including Councillor Oliver) took place on 29 July 2020 to begin the planning for the Remembrance Service on Sunday 8 November. There are changes proposed for this event, with no Church service (because of the social distancing requirements), the marching parade to follow a different route and some form of celebratory event on the Market Place after the service at the War Memorial. A further planning meeting is scheduled for 3 September 2020.

Town Hall/office

Since the Covid-19 lockdown, members of the public have not been allowed access to the building. Methods of contact have been by telephone, e-mail or post. This has operated very well, with no apparent reduction in service to the public.

This arrangement will operate until at least the end of this month. Members of the Assets Management Committee may wish to consider this as a permanent arrangement, given that the committee had raised concerns previously regarding the security of staff when working alone.

Two new notice boards, to replace the current "tired" and damaged ones, have been purchased. It has been established from the Local Planning Authority that Listed Building Consent would not be required for their installation on the Town Hall.

In accordance with a decision of the Assets Management Committee, officers are currently examining options for the improvement of the council's telephone system; to provide additional user capacity; this is likely to be a VOIP system.

Wisbech Castle

The building is currently closed to the public. Whilst closed, a considerable amount of work has been undertaken by volunteers in terms of internal re-decoration of the main building and development of the garden. The Castle hosted its first wedding on Saturday 8 August and was a tremendous success. Members will have seen from 20 July 2020 minutes of the Wisbech Castle Management Committee an update on the situation and works proposed.



Correspondence

The Clerk informed members that he had no items of correspondence to draw to their attention at this time.

Minutes of committees

The Clerk reported the minutes of the meetings of committees which had taken place since the last meeting of Wisbech Town Council; those being:

- (1) Planning and Community Infrastructure Committee – 6 July 2020;
- (2) Staffing Committee – 6 July 2020;
- (3) Planning and Community Infrastructure Committee – 20 July 2020;
- (4) Wisbech Castle Management Committee – 20 July 2020;
- (5) Planning and Community Infrastructure Committee – 3 August 2020.

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

32/20 Date of next meeting

Members considered setting a date for the next meeting of Wisbech Town Council.

Members decided that the next meeting of Wisbech Town Council be arranged by the Clerk, following consultation with members as to their availability; whatever date selected, the meeting would commence at 7.30 pm and be held using the Zoom video conferencing system.

Meeting finished at 9.00 pm.

Signed

Date