



## WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL

17 February 2020 – 7.30pm

### MINUTES OF MEETING

**Present:** Councillor Hill, Chairman (and Town Mayor); Councillors Balsevics, Miss Hoy, Human, Ketteringham, Maul, Meekins, Oliver, Mrs Pehlivanova, Prest, Rackley, Tibbs, Tierney, Topgood, Mrs Wallwork and Wing.

**Apologies:** Councillors Lynn and Patrick.

**Public participation:** None requested.

#### **140/19 Relate**

Further to minute R17/18 (at which the organisation was awarded grant funding of £750), members received a presentation from Mrs C Goddard, the Chief Executive of Relate Cambridge, in relation to the support that it provides to local couples, families and individuals to make relationships work better.

Mrs Goddard thanked the council for the grant aid that had been provided last year and commented that she would give councillors information regarding the services that Relate provides and how its funds are spent. She made the point that although the name of the organisation is Relate Cambridge, the organisation covers a larger area, which includes Fenland.

Mrs Goddard made the point that the services which are provided by Relate are all about supporting relationships at every stage of a person's life.

The Vision of Relate is a future in which healthy relationships are promoted actively as the heart of a thriving society. Its mission is to make expert information and support for healthy relationships available to everyone. The values that underpin the behaviour of Relate, are to be: caring; connected; smart. Mrs Goddard mentioned that Relate had provided in excess of 6,000 counselling sessions in 2019.

Mrs Goddard provided some statistical information regarding relationships; such as:

- 42% of marriages would end in divorce
- 40% of co-habiting couples would separate before their tenth anniversary
- approximately 750,000 children each year in the UK would witness domestic violence.

The council was informed by Mrs Goddard of the top ten issues that people bring to Relate; these include:

- communication problems
- marital affairs
- mental illness
- separation and divorce
- bereavement.

Mrs Goddard commented that some people bring more than one issue. Relate has a team of specialist counsellors, who support more than 200 appointments each week.



Mrs Goddard explained each of the five services that Relate delivers; these are:

- Relationship Counselling
- Sexual issues
- Family Counselling (the term “family” is used in its widest sense but mainly relates to children and parents)
- Relate 4 Parents (delivered to assist people in parenting their children; an educational approach, as opposed to counselling)
- Children and young people’s services (Relate sees children as young as five years of age harming themselves).

Relate’s aim is to empower people to make the most appropriate decisions; for example, “saving” a marriage is not always the most appropriate outcome for a couple which is experiencing a relationship breakdown.

The council was informed by Mrs Goddard that Relate’s presence in Wisbech began in 2016; it is provided with accommodation, free-of-charge, by Cambridgeshire County Council at Awdry House.

Mrs Goddard presented statistics in relation to Relate’s activities in Wisbech; this work had been assisted by the grant aid which had been provided in 2019 by Wisbech Town Council. 91 appointments had been delivered in 2019. The most common issues for which support had been sought from Relate in Wisbech are communication problems, trust issues, matters relating to children and illness (mental and physical).

The council was informed by Mrs Goddard that Relate Cambridge, which had running costs of approximately £400,000 last year, receives no funding from the Government. Clients are requested to make a payment based upon their ability to pay. She made the point that Relate could not continue to operate without sponsorship and financial assistance from certain businesses, charities and grant-funding bodies. That is why the financial support provided by Wisbech Town Council is so important.

Mrs Goddard read to the council the testimonials of some of Relate’s clients and mentioned that 94% of clients say that they would recommend Relate Cambridge after using its services.

Mrs Goddard responded to members’ questions.

Members decided that the information presented be noted.

### **141/19 Cambridgeshire Constabulary**

Although no officer of Cambridgeshire Constabulary attended the meeting, the Constabulary had provided to the Clerk, via e-mail, the new Fenland Neighbourhood Policing Team Monthly Review report (minute 4/18 refers) on recent incidents of crime and disorder and other matters in Wisbech and the northern villages in Fenland. The Clerk summarised briefly the report.

The report mentions that the Neighbourhood Policing Team’s priorities over the last month had been:

1. continuing to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the town centre and Wisbech Park
2. the interruption of drug activity in the PE13 postcode area
3. reducing cycle thefts.



Mention is made in the report that the Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) had spent a considerable amount of time dealing with youth-related anti-social behaviour within the town park and town centre areas. The NPT had increased its high-visibility foot patrols in those areas, as well as conducting plain-clothed patrols, to gather intelligence and identify perpetrators. Over the past few months, positive action had been taken against identified perpetrators and their parents.

The report states that there had been a significant increase in the number of cycle thefts (from both the town centre areas and residential areas) during the last six months of 2019. In response, officers had reviewed all intelligence and every crime, maximising investigative opportunities; consequently, a number of offenders had been identified. Two of the offenders had been charged to Court for a number of theft and going equipped to steal offences. In addition, the NPT had target-hardened with leaflet drops in affected areas; also, signage had been placed in areas where unlocked cycles had been stolen, encouraging persons to lock their cycles. There has been a significant reduction in cycle crime; since 1 January 2020, there had been only 4 reported thefts of cycles. This series remains under review and the NPT continues to investigate new offences.

The Police continue to encourage the public to provide intelligence relating to drug supply; this can be submitted easily via the Constabulary website.

The report mentions that four incidents of theft from motor vehicles within Wisbech Town had been reported during January 2020. Officers had arrested one male after being found breaking into a vehicle at Norwich Road, Wisbech; he has been charged with one offence and awaits a Court appearance.

Four dwelling burglaries in the town had been reported in January 2020 and these remain under investigation. Since the beginning of 2020 there had been 25 reports of missing persons within the town; The NPT had been involved in assisting in the search for many of these, particularly those deemed as high risk.

Mention is made in the report that PCSOs and Special Constables continue their efforts to combat illegal and inappropriate parking around the town and outside schools; almost 80 tickets had been issued since the beginning of the year; this work is planned to continue.

In addition, the Neighbourhood Policing Team had spent time undertaking

- school engagement(s)
- care home engagement(s)
- vehicle stops and seizures for no insurance/no licence
- speed enforcement (Including assisting with the Community Speed Watch activity)
- assisting, when demand is high, colleagues who respond to emergency calls.

Councillor Tierney expressed his appreciation of the work of the officers who had “tracked down” those who had caused the damage to the bee hives at Wisbech Castle. He took the opportunity to clarify the exact situation with regard to that damage (one hive had suffered damage and a number of bees, exact number unknown, had been lost). In addition, he mentioned that the council had received a number of offers from local people to undertake activity to raise funds to meet the cost, which had been exaggerated by the local media, of undertaking remedial work.

Members decided that the situation be noted.



## **142/19 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, last week by e-mail, to all members of the council.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

### **(2) Landlord event**

Councillor Miss Hoy, in her capacity as the District Council's Cabinet member with responsibilities for Housing, informed members that the District Council had organised an event, to take place on 3 March 2020 (6.00 pm until 9.00 pm) at the Boathouse in Wisbech, for the purpose of giving landlords the chance to ask a panel of professionals, using a "Question Time" format, about all aspects of the private-rental housing sector.

The aim of the event, which is free-of-charge, is to help landlords keep abreast of their responsibilities and legal obligations to tenants.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

## **143/19 Cambridgeshire County Council**

### **(1) Local Highway Improvement scheme 2021/22**

The Clerk read to members an e-mail that he had received from Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) in relation to the manner in which CCC proposes to operate the Local Highway Improvement schemes' process for the financial year 2021/22.

The e-mail states that, following discussions at the County Council regarding the delivery timescales experienced for Local Highway Improvement (LHI) schemes and concerns raised regarding the number of schemes not completed within the financial year for which the funding is allocated, it is proposed that the application "window" for schemes to be delivered in the 2021/22 financial year be brought forward by two months, opening on 1 April 2020 and closing on 31 May 2020.

The point is made by the County Council that changing the application period would see the feasibility studies undertaken between May and September 2020, panel meetings taking place in October and committee approval in December 2020. This would mean that the winter period, January to March 2021, could be used to begin designing schemes for delivery from 1 April 2021, making use of the better weather for delivery rather than design.

This proposal will be presented to the County Council's Highway and Infrastructure Committee in March 2020 for approval. Town and Parish Councils would be informed of the outcome of that committee's consideration of this proposal.

Members decided that the situation be noted.



## **(2) Highways fault reporting**

Councillor Human commented that he wished to “sing the praises” of the Local Highway Authority (LHA) for its timely and efficient response to a footway defect; it had been reported by him last Sunday; it had been marked by an officer of the LHA on Tuesday and repaired by that council’s contractor on Friday.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

## **144/19 Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 20 January 2020**

Members decided, on the proposal of Councillor Oliver, seconded by Councillor Prest, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of 20 January 2020 be confirmed and signed.

## **145/19 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 – 20 January 2020
- (2) Community Events and Festivals Committee – 27 January 2020
- (3) Planning and Community Infrastructure Committee – 3 February 2020.

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

## **146/19 Mayor’s Report**

The Mayor informed members that he had attended 14 events since the last meeting of Wisbech Town Council; he commented that some of the events had been some distance from Wisbech.

He mentioned that he had attended the Fenland Gymnastics Extravaganza, at which he had seen a number of good performances by the young participants. He had also attended the launch of the Reading Well for Children project at Wisbech Library; through this project, books are provided for people who experience difficulty reading.

The Mayor mentioned his attendance, last Friday, at the opening of the Mart Fair at King’s Lynn and that he is looking forward to the fair’s arrival in Wisbech. He commented that he had spent an enjoyable evening at Wisbech Lions’ Chapter Dinner on Saturday.

The Mayor informed members that he would be holding a fundraising event on 1 April 2020; this would consist of him having a head and beard shave, followed by a Curry Night, in the Council Chamber; he provided each member with a sponsorship form in relation to the head and beard shave. He mentioned also that he would be holding a Civic Service (at St Peter and St Paul’s Church), followed by a Sunday Lunch (at Crown Lodge, Outwell) on 26 April 2020. A date/time for the Mayor’s At Home is still to be fixed.

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

## **147/19 Leader of the Council’s report**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Miss Hoy, commented that the council’s committees continue to work hard, both in terms of ensuring delivery of the council’s current projects and also looking to



the future; each of the council's Committee Chairmen would be providing an update at the next meeting of the council on the work of those committees.

Members were informed by the Leader of the Council that, following agreement, on 27 January 2020, by the Community Events and Festivals Committee of a programme of events and festivals for the financial year 2020/21, a meeting of the associated working party had been arranged for 24 February 2020, to begin planning those events and festivals.

Councillor Miss Hoy mentioned that the Wisbech Unsung Heroes Awards 2019 ceremony had taken place on 24 January 2020 and, like the previous one, had been a very successful occasion. She stated that she is pleased that almost all of the shortlisted nominees and their nominators, as well as most councillors, had been able to attend; almost 100 people attended the ceremony. Councillor Miss Hoy expressed her thanks to those councillors and members of staff who had played a role in the organisation and delivery of this event. Also, she thanked the sponsors of the event – AJ Bars, Bygones Café and the Fenland Citizen newspaper. She commented that, because of the success of the event, the Community Events and Festivals Committee had included this event again in the programme for 2020/21; she is hopeful that it would be possible to attract the same sponsorship for the next ceremony.

The Leader of the Council mentioned the damage which had been caused to the stadium at Wisbech Town football ground, a week or so ago, as a result of Storm Ciara, and the fundraising activity being undertaken by the club to raise funds to meet the cost of repairing the damage. She commented that she would like to see Wisbech Town Council support this activity and proposes that an additional meeting of Wisbech Town Council be convened for such consideration.

Councillor Miss Hoy shared her opinion with members that Wisbech Town Council should consider embarking upon a campaign of opposition to the proposed incinerator for Wisbech; she believes that it is what the public would wish this council to do. She proposed that this matter also be discussed at the additional meeting of the council; she expressed the view that, if such a proposal were approved, a working party should be created to devise and run such a campaign.

The Leader of the Council made reference to the changes to staffing arrangements agreed by the Staffing Committee, which had resulted in the creation of a new post of Customer Services and Liaison Officer and a re-designed post of Markets and Allotments Officer. The Clerk had undertaken the necessary recruitment processes; as a result of which the Customer Services and Liaison Officer had commenced employment with Wisbech Town Council on 10 February 2020 – that officer is Mrs Tina Gambell – and interviews for the post of Markets and Allotments Officer concluded earlier today. Councillor Miss Hoy expressed the hope that a post holder would be in place within the next couple of weeks and she expressed her appreciation of the work which had been undertaken by Terry Jordan, Clerk to the Council, and Tracy Bidwell-Hazell, the council's Administrative Services and Civics Officer, over a number of months, to continue to deliver services despite the level of staff vacancies.

Councillor Miss Hoy informed members that she and the Clerk would be attending, on Friday of this week, a meeting of the Wisbech 2020 Vision Core Vision Group; that meeting would be used to "take stock" of the achievements to date and to decide upon the manner in which to "go forward".

Mention was made by the Leader of the Council that the first meeting of the Community Speed Watch Working Party had taken place last on 10 February 2020 and she understands that, as a result of that meeting, appropriate activity – including the identification of sites for speed monitoring, recruiting volunteers and arranging training – is underway.



The Leader of the Council commented that she is pleased to be able to inform members that the Friends of Wisbech Park group had been successful in applying to Government for funding to undertake tidying and clearance works to the churchyard at the rear of the old Octagon Church at Oil Mills Lane.

The level of funding achieved is £15,350. The first stage of the work, which is likely to begin later this month or early next month, would be to remove some of the larger trees (without causing damage to graves). The Friends of Wisbech Park and the Wisbech Street Pride group would then undertake planting and other work to enhance the appearance of the site. The aim is to have all works completed in time for the Heritage Open Days weekends in September of this year.

Members were informed by the Leader of the Council that the Mart Fair would arrive in town on 23 February. All members of Wisbech Town Council are invited to the official opening, at 6.00 pm on 28 February 2020, by the Mayor. Further details of the arrangements would be provided to members, by the Clerk, in due course.

Members decided that the comments of the Leader of the Council be noted and that an additional meeting of Wisbech Town Council be convened for 2 March 2020 (to commence at 7.30 pm).

#### **148/19 Questions to the Leader of the Council**

In accordance with minute 128/16, Councillor Maul asked a question of the Leader of the Council as to whether she would be prepared to have a Questions to the Leader of the Council as a standing item, not only when requested by a councillor, on the agenda for meetings of Wisbech Town Council.

Councillor Maul commented that the reason he is asking is that, he understands that when this item had been introduced originally (at minute 128/16) it required a councillor to give no less than five clear working days' notice in writing of the specific question that was to be asked. He commented that, given that the agenda for a council meeting is produced almost a week in advance of that meeting, there may be situations where a councillor wishes to ask a question of the Leader of the Council but the required time limit could not be achieved and, therefore, the question would need to wait until a later meeting.

Councillor Maul made the point that he would still, as a matter of courtesy to the Leader, suggest that questions be submitted in writing (where possible) in cases when a member wishes to ask a question but he feels that if could be a standing item, it would be useful to all members of the council.

In response, the Leader of the Council stated that she would be happy to re-introduce this as a standing item on the agenda for meetings of Wisbech Town Council (it had originally been agreed as a standing item but, because no questions were being asked, it had been decided, at minute 52/17, that the item would only feature on future agendas if questions had been submitted). She is of the opinion that a member wishing to ask a question should be required to give notice of the question, in case research were needed for the Leader of the Council to be able to provide an accurate answer at the council meeting. Councillor Maul stated that he would be happy with such an arrangement.

Councillor Human commented that Wisbech Town Council had, in the past, received presentations from Clarion Housing, which he had found to be very useful. He suggested that, although the main issue which had been faced by some of Clarion's tenants (problems with heating systems) now seems to have been addressed, an annual report from Clarion Housing may be useful. Other members agreed.



Members decided that

- (1) the question asked by Councillor Maul and the response given by the Leader of the Council be noted and, consequently, a Questions to the Leader of the Council item would be included on the agenda for all ordinary meetings of Wisbech Town Council (to operate in the manner agreed at minute 128/16);
- (2) the Clerk would request Clarion Housing to submit an annual report to Wisbech Town Council.

### **149/19 Questions to Committee Chairmen**

Councillor Maul mentioned that he had been pleased that members had supported, in November 2017 (at minute 114/17) his proposal to have quarterly reports from the Chairman of each Committee at meetings of Wisbech Town Council.

Councillor Maul commented that he is now asking members to consider having a standing item on the agenda for each meeting of Wisbech Town Council whereby members would be able to ask questions of Committee Chairmen. He made the point that some of the council's committees have a lot happening and he feels that, in the mind-set of openness and transparency, members would benefit from having the opportunity to raise issues or ask questions more frequently.

Councillor Maul made the point that a similar opportunity exists at meetings of Fenland District Council, where its members are able to ask questions of Cabinet members, and he could see no reason why Wisbech Town Council could not adopt a similar approach with its Committee Chairmen.

Councillor Tierney stated that he does not support Councillor Maul's proposal. He made the point that there is a considerable difference between the role of a Cabinet member at Fenland District Council (who has decision-making powers and receives a Special Responsibility Allowance) and that of Committee Chairmen at Wisbech Town Council (who have no powers and receive no payment). He commented that there are plenty of opportunities for members of this council to obtain information in relation to the work of the council's committees; all members are able to attend meetings of the committees and there is also the opportunity to make contact with Committee Chairmen or the Town Clerk to obtain information. Decisions of committees are recorded in the minutes of the meetings, which are not only reported to meetings of the Town Council but also published on its website.

Councillor Miss Hoy made the point that not all of the Independent Councillors had taken their seats on council committees, which she finds frustrating. She expressed the opinion that those members would have a greater knowledge of what is happening if they had taken the seats allocated to them. Councillor Miss Hoy does acknowledge that Councillor Maul participates fully in the work of the committees of which he is a member.

The point made by Councillor Tierney, that there is a considerable difference between the role of a Cabinet member at Fenland District Council and that of Committee Chairman at Wisbech Town Council, was re-iterated by Councillor Miss Hoy.

A proposition put by Councillor Maul, seconded by Councillor Meekins, that an item be included on the agenda for each meeting of Wisbech Town Council whereby members would be able to ask questions of Committee Chairmen, was put to the vote and lost.



**150/19 Grit bin**

Members considered a request from a member of the public for this council to purchase and install a grit bin (via Cambridgeshire County Council) in the vicinity of the junction of Tavistock Road and Bowthorpe Road, Wisbech.

Councillors Lynn and Prest informed members that they had been approached by a resident of Townshend Road, Wisbech regarding this matter; the resident had detailed in an e-mail to the council the rationale for requesting such a bin, i.e. in summary, because of the dangerous nature of Bowthorpe Road in icy conditions.

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Prest, seconded by Councillor Tibbs, that a grit bin be purchased for installation, at a location to be determined by the Local Highway Authority, in the vicinity of the junction of Tavistock Road and Bowthorpe Road, Wisbech.

**151/19 Correspondence**

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

Members decided that the situation be noted.

**152/19 Notice board/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.

**153/19 Date of next meeting**

Members were reminded that, apart from the additional meeting agreed at minute 147/19 for 2 March 2020, the next meeting of Wisbech Town Council is scheduled for 16 March 2020, to commence at 7.30 pm, at the offices of Wisbech Town Council.

**Meeting finished at 8.30 pm.**

Signed .....

Date .....