



WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL

20 September 2021 – 7.30 pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: Councillor Lynn, Chairman (and Town Mayor); Councillors Hoy, Ketteringham, Maul, Meekins, Oliver, Patrick, Pehlivanova, Prest, Rackley, Tierney and Wallwork.

Apologies: Councillors Balsevics, Hill, Human, Imafidon, Tibbs and Topgood.

45/21 Reg Mee and John McIntosh

The Mayor referred to the recent deaths of Reg Mee (a former member of Wisbech Town Council) and John McIntosh (one of the three War Veterans who had been awarded the Freedom of the Town of Wisbech in 2017).

Members stood in silence for one minute in memory of Mr Mee and Mr McIntosh.

46/21 Genell Support CIC

Members received a presentation from two representatives of Genell Support CIC – Lyana Sinclair-Russell and Shaun Whitfield - on the services that this supported-living provider delivers in Wisbech for young care leavers aged 16 years and over. The mission statement of the CIC is “making a difference not a profit”.

Lyana Sinclair-Russell informed the council that Genell Support CIC began operating services in Wisbech, with one property, in January 2021 and is about to open its second property later this week. Neither her nor Shaun Whitfield draw a salary for their work with Genell Support CIC. The properties operated by the CIC are “staffed” by paid employees on a 24x7 basis. The staff are all qualified at a level higher than the minimum level (that being Level 2). The revenue generated by Genell Support CIC is spent on supporting those who use the services provided by this CIC.

The council was informed by Lyana Sinclair-Russell that Shaun Whitfield and she had worked in this sector for more than 20 years. She mentioned that the “clients” of Genell Support CIC are at least 16 years of age. Some of those who are supported have been the victims of exploitation (such as County Lines drugs trafficking) or who have learning difficulties; many have not obtained any formal qualifications.

The “package” of support that is provided by Genell Support CIC includes driving lessons and apprenticeships (including hairdressing), as well as in-house training (such as First Aid and general life-skills). The CIC also offers a therapeutic support framework; this includes counselling and, if necessary, ongoing therapy.

The council was shown photographs of the interior and exterior of the CIC’s supported living homes, which show that they are comfortable and “homely”.

The point was made by Shaun Whitfield that there can be significant issues for young care-leavers unless supported. He made the point that those in care are no longer supported by the local authority beyond the age of 18 years. As part of the CIC’s Moving-on programme, the young people who have been supported are able to access “life-long” advice and assistance from Genell Support CIC.



The CIC operates Gennell Support Foundation Kenya, through which 8 children are accommodated. Some of the young people supported by the CIC in the UK correspond with those children in Kenya.

Genell Support CIC also operates:

- Kayla's Rainbow Appeal – a charity for which the CIC raises funds (Kayla is a child in remission from cancer)
- Veteran's Hike CIC – working with veterans to get out and about; providing sponsorship and equipment
- It's OK to Say – a one-off project aimed at supporting young people who suffer from mental health issues.

The council was informed that Genell Support CIC delivers Local Authority Framework Contracts on behalf of Essex County Council, Staffordshire County Council and the London Local Authority Alliance. The CIC has made applications recently to Cambridgeshire County Council and Lincolnshire County Council.

Lyana Sinclair-Russell and Shaun Whitfield responded to members' questions.

Councillor Lynn asked what Genell Support CIC would like from Wisbech Town Council. In response, Lyana Sinclair-Russell commented that the CIC would like assistance with identifying volunteering opportunities and apprenticeships, as well as increasing the public's awareness of the CIC and what it is seeking to achieve.

In response to a question from Councillor Meekins as to how many young people would be supported in Wisbech by the CIC, Lyana Sinclair-Russell stated that five young people would be accommodated by the CIC's two properties.

Councillor Hoy commented that she is pleased that the counselling support for these young people is provided free-of-charge. In response to a question from Councillor Hoy as to how the purchase of the properties in Wisbech had been funded, Lyana Sinclair-Russell stated that she is the owner of both properties.

Councillor Hoy commented that she is encouraged by the fact that the houses are staffed on a 24x7 basis; this provides much-needed support to young people who are potentially vulnerable. She expressed the opinion that offering driving lessons to these young people is a great opportunity for them; being able to drive is a necessary skill when living in a rural area such as Fenland.

Councillor Hoy commented that she is very pleased that these potentially vulnerable young people are being supported so well by Genell Support CIC.

Councillor Wallwork enquired as to whether these young care-leavers have a choice as to whether they engage with Genell Support CIC or whether it is a placement by the local authority. Shaun Whitfield responded, stating that any care-leaver of at least 16 years of age has the choice.

Lyana Sinclair-Russell informed the council that the activities of Genell Support CIC are inspected/audited; this is not mandatory but the CIC invites such scrutiny. She is hopeful that some form of regulatory framework would be introduced in respect of this type of activity in the future.

Councillor Tierney expressed the opinion that it is clear that both Lyana Sinclair-Russell and Shaun Whitfield are very passionate about what they are doing and asked whether there is any danger that this service is reliant upon them being personally involved. Lyana Sinclair-Russell responded, making the point that Genell Support CIC does have a Manager who is responsible for day-to-day



operations. Shaun Whitfield commented that neither he nor Lyana are care-deliverers; consequently, the service could continue operating without them.

In response to a question from Councillor Maul as to whether Shaun and Lyana live locally, Shaun commented that they live in Ely and Chatteris respectively.

Members decided that the information presented be noted and the Clerk would share the e-mail contact details for Genell Support CIC with all members of the council.

47/21 Fenland Families and Baby Bank

Further to minute 32/21, members considered the information which had been provide subsequently by Rachel Green in respect of the Fenland Families and Baby Bank.

The information which had been provided includes:

- a copy of the Fenland Families and Baby Bank's Business Plan (April 2021)
- mention of the fact that the Fenland Families and Baby Bank had made an application to become a Community Interest Company
- details of the Fenland Families and Baby Bank's current monthly operating costs (£400 pcm for shop rent; £200 pcm for a storage unit; £88.46 pcm for van insurance; other incidental costs such as purchasing cleaning products and the occasional purchase of essential baby products (such as nappies and milk formula)).

The point is made within the information provided that the Fenland Families and Baby Bank's income is dependent upon the generosity of donations and through the sale of over-stocked items. On average, the Fenland Families and Baby Bank can raise approximately £800 pcm; however, the income level is not stable and varies from month-to-month.

The Fenland Families and Baby Bank's hopes and aspirations for the baby bank are detailed in the business plan; however, the biggest challenge to achieving these is to move into larger premises (in Wisbech).

The Fenland Families and Baby Bank have viewed two properties in Wisbech, both of which are in Union Street. The rent of the preferred property is £650 pcm. The Fenland Families and Baby Bank has prepared estimates of the costs of getting the shop "up and running"; including floor coverings, paint, fixtures and fittings etc. The intention is that this shop in Wisbech would replace the shop and the storage unit in March.

All the information which had been provided to Wisbech Town Council by the Fenland Families and Baby Bank had been forwarded, by the Clerk, to members in advance of the meeting.

Councillor Meekins expressed the opinion that Rachel Green is clearly very passionate about this project and he reminded members that they had agreed, at minute 32/21, to consider providing financial support once the Fenland Families and Baby Bank becomes a Community Interest Company (CIC) and provides the council with income and expenditure forecasts. He commented that the documentation which had been provided to the council does not prove that an application to become a CIC had been made; also, he does not consider that sufficient financial information had been provided.

Councillor Meekins commented that he is not minded to agree the provision of financial support to the Fenland Families and Baby Bank at this stage. He suggested that the Fenland Families and Baby Bank would benefit from support with developing proper financial planning. He stated that he has the relevant experience in that regard and would be happy to offer his assistance.



Councillor Hoy commented that Rachel Green had delivered a good presentation at minute 32/21 and it is clear that she is prepared to do all that is necessary to develop the services and activity of the Fenland Families and Baby Bank. Councillor Hoy is of the opinion that the cost of renovating the shop unit may exceed the estimates produced by the Fenland Families and Baby Bank. She suggested that the council informs Rachel Green that Wisbech Town Council supports the Fenland Families and Baby Bank's proposal to deliver services in Wisbech but requires more information before it could allocate financial support to the project.

Councillor Maul expressed the opinion that the offer of Councillor Meekins, to provide financial expertise to this project, is very generous but what is needed is for Rachel Green to provide more cash-flow information. He mentioned that he had met with her last Friday and he had suggested to her that she obtains more costings. Councillor Maul indicated that he would happily work with Councillor Meekins in providing financial advice and guidance to the Fenland Families and Baby Bank.

Councillor Tierney expressed his concurrence with the comments which had been made by other members; however, he does not want the council to come-across as not being supportive of this project. He agrees that the Fenland Families and Baby Bank needs to be a CIC before this council could allocate any financial support.

Councillor Wallwork commented that she wishes this project to be provided with funding from Wisbech Town Council; Rachel Green is already raising funds to provide this service. Councillor Wallwork considers that this council should assist the Fenland Families and Baby Bank to operate in Wisbech.

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Hoy, seconded by Councillor Meekins, that

- (1) Wisbech Town Council is minded to provide funding to meet the cost of three months' rent of a shop unit in Wisbech for the Fenland Families and Baby Bank;
- (2) such funding would only be allocated once the council had received financial projections of income and expenditure and the Fenland Families and Baby Bank had become a Community Interest Company;
- (3) the Fenland Families and Baby Bank be offered the assistance of Councillors Maul, Meekins and Wallwork to assist in the production of a fully costed business plan;
- (4) this matter be discussed further at the next meeting of Wisbech Town Council if sufficient progress has been made.

48/21 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) Wisbech Castle: Asset of Community Value

Members were informed by the Clerk that Fenland District Council (FDC) had received a request from Wisbech Projects CIC for FDC to re-list Wisbech Castle as an Asset of Community Value. The request must be considered by Fenland District Council prior to 28 October 2021, when the existing listing expires.

As part of the consideration process, there is an opportunity for Wisbech Town Council to provide any comments that it may have in relation to the re-listing request.

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Hoy, seconded by Councillor Tierney, that Wisbech Town Council supports the continued listing of Wisbech Castle as an Asset of Community Value.

(Councillor Pehlivanova declared her potential pecuniary interest in this item of business, by virtue of being a commercial tenant of Wisbech Castle, and retired from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon)

(3) Supported Housing Fellowship

Councillor Hoy, in her capacity as a member of Fenland District Council, informed members that she had visited the Supported Housing Fellowship (SHF) in Wisbech. She mentioned that the SHF is just completing the purchase of one property and is aiming to acquire a further two within the next six weeks.

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

49/21 Cambridgeshire County Council

(1) Environment and Green Investment Committee

Councillor Tierney, in his capacity as a member of Cambridgeshire County Council, gave members an insight into discussions at a recent meeting of the County Council's Environment and Green Investment Committee.

Members were informed by Councillor Tierney that the committee aims to reduce car travel within the County. He commented that one member of the controlling group at that council (a Liberal Democrat councillor) had suggested at the meeting that the proposals do not go far enough; they should include banning cars on new housing estates.

Councillor Tierney expressed the opinion that, given such thinking, residents of Cambridgeshire could have some interesting years ahead.

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

(2) Local Highway Improvement schemes 2021/22

Further to minute 35/21 (1), the Clerk informed members that the formal public consultation exercise in relation to the Local Highway Improvement (LHI) scheme for the introduction of "all-time" parking restrictions (i.e. double yellow lines) at the junction of New Drove and Leach Close, Wisbech had concluded. However, two objections had been received by the Local Highway Authority from residents of Leach Close.



The Local Highway Authority (LHA) is asking how Wisbech Town Council would, in the light of the objections, like to proceed. The LHA comments that it could look at reducing the length of the proposed double yellow lining but that would have an adverse effect upon the effectiveness of the proposal.

Members share the opinion of the Project Officer at the Local Highway Authority that reducing the length of the proposed lining would have an adverse effect upon the effectiveness of the proposal and, hence, are not supportive of such a course of action.

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Hoy, seconded by Councillor Tierney, that Wisbech Town Council would like this scheme to proceed without shortening the proposed double yellow lines.

(3) Local Highway Improvement schemes 2022/23

Further to minute 35/21 (2), members considered the submission of applications for Local Highway Improvement (LHI) schemes for 2022/23.

Councillor Hoy proposed that a scheme be submitted in respect of providing a safer route at Wisbech Retail Park, possibly dropped kerbs, for those who have mobility issues.

Councillor Prest mentioned that he may be proposing a scheme for the introduction of all-time parking restrictions (double yellow lines) from Trafford Road into Clarkson Avenue. Councillor Patrick mentioned that he may have a possible LHI scheme for Sefton Avenue.

Councillor Hoy expressed the opinion that schemes which introduce parking restrictions or traffic calming often generate as many objectors as they do supporters. Councillor Tierney concurred with Councillor Hoy's opinion, suggesting that Councillors Patrick and Prest undertake some informal consultation with local residents before proposing a LHI scheme.

Members decided, on the proposal Of Councillor Hoy, seconded by Councillor Tierney, that

- (1) an application be made to Cambridgeshire County Council, under the Local Highway Improvement (LHI) scheme for 2022/23, for works to provide a safer route at Wisbech Retail Park, possibly dropped kerbs, for those who have mobility issues;
- (2) Councillors Patrick and Prest would give further thought to the potential LHI schemes for Sefton Avenue and Trafford Road/Clarkson Avenue, Wisbech respectively.

50/21 Cambridgeshire Constabulary

Members took the opportunity to consider any matters relating to crime and disorder in Wisbech, for reference to Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

Councillor Maul mentioned that a matter had been raised with him yesterday morning, which had involved anti-social behaviour outside of the Empire Theatre; on several occasions, both customers and the staff had been intimidated by a group of youths.

Councillor Wallwork congratulated the local policing team on its good social media presence.

Councillor Tierney mentioned that both Councillor Lynn and he had attended a meeting of the Police and Crime Panel last week. Although the usual response had been given by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in relation to issues raised in relation to crime and disorder, i.e. that the police need to focus on matters in order of priority, Councillor Tierney is hopeful that policing locally would



improve. He mentioned that the PCC is working on the production of a new Policing Plan for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and he was impressed with what he heard from the PCC.

Councillor Lynn expressed the opinion that the Police and Crime Commissioner, who had only been in post since May of this year, has started well in trying to improve policing within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Members were informed by Councillor Lynn that the Police and Crime Commissioner would be meeting with all the Community Safety Partnerships across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Clerk reported that he had forwarded to the Police and Crime Commissioner a copy of minute 36/21 but, to date, had received no response.

Members decided that the information reported be noted.

51/21 Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 9 August 2021

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Prest, seconded by Councillor Wallwork, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of 9 August 2021 be confirmed and signed, subject to minor amendments being made to reflect questions that been asked and points that had been made by Councillor Meekins at minute 32/21. The Clerk undertook to make the agreed amendments to minute 32/21 prior to publication of the minutes on the council's website.

52/21 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 – 9 August 2021
- (2) Planning and Community Infrastructure Committee – 23 August 2021
- (3) Planning and Community Infrastructure Committee – 6 September 2021.

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

53/21 Provision of defibrillators in Wisbech

Further to minute 40/21, Councillor Meekins reported on the outcome of the working party's investigations and research into the purchase and installation of defibrillators at strategic points around the town.

Councillor Meekins informed members that the working party (comprising Councillors Tibbs, Topgood and he) had discussed the issues via e-mails correspondence and the working party had, consequently, agreed to recommend to Wisbech Town Council that it purchases three defibrillators which are the same type as the ones which had been installed in the town of March and other locations within Fenland. The working party is suggesting that the three locations for the installation of these defibrillators in Wisbech could be Wisbech Castle, the Market Place and Wisbech Park (in the vicinity of the Vertical Garden).

Councillor Meekins referred to a recent article in the Wisbech Standard newspaper, which had mentioned that the life of someone who had been playing Walking Football at Wisbech Town Football Club had been saved because of the availability of a defibrillator.

Members were informed by Councillor Meekins that the cost of each unit would be £1,490 plus VAT; that figure includes a lockable cabinet and preparation kit for each unit. He explained how these units operate in terms of providing the correct level of electric shock to a patient.



Councillor Tierney mentioned that he had been contacted by a representative of Wisbech Rugby Club, who had enquired as to whether the rugby club could be considered as a location for the installation of a defibrillator.

Councillor Prest commented that he is supportive of the installation of defibrillators at Wisbech Castle and Wisbech Park and is of the opinion that Wisbech Rugby Club would be a better location than the Market Place (given that there is already a defibrillator in the Horsefair Shopping Centre) for installation of the third unit. He suggested that signage could be displayed at the Market Place, directing people to the defibrillators in the Horsefair Shopping Centre and at Wisbech Castle.

Members decided, on the proposal of Councillor Meekins, seconded by Councillor Prest, that Wisbech Town Council would purchase three defibrillators (at a cost of £1,490 plus VAT each) for installation at Wisbech Castle, Wisbech Park and Wisbech Rugby Club.

54/21 Wisbech/Arles Twinning Club

Further to minute 169/19, Councillor Meekins informed members on the current situation regarding the Wisbech/Arles Twinning Club.

Councillor Meekins, who is now the Chairman of the Wisbech/Arles Twinning Club, mentioned that the club had, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, been relatively inactive since 2019. He reminded members that on the occasions that a group of Arlesians visits Wisbech, the club makes application to the council for grant funding to support activities which would be provided in association with the visit; it is hoped that such a twinning visit - either Arlesians visiting Wisbech or people from Wisbech visiting Arles - could be arranged for 2022.

The point was made by Councillor Meekins that 2024 would be the 60th Anniversary of the club being formed; the club is hopeful that there would some celebration in 2024 to recognise that fact.

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

55/21 Waste bin

Members considered the proposal of Councillor Prest that Wisbech Town Council purchases a waste bin for installation, at a suitable location, at the junction of Clarkson Avenue and Tavistock Road, Wisbech.

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Prest, seconded by Councillor Patrick, that a waste bin be purchased for installation at the junction of Clarkson Avenue and Tavistock Road, Wisbech.

56/21 Mayor's report

The Mayor informed members that he had been able to do very little in the Mayoral role since the last meeting of the council; firstly, because of a period of family holiday; secondly because of contracting the Covid-19 virus. He mentioned that the Deputy Mayor had attended events and activities in his stead when available to do so.

Members were informed by the Mayor that he had been able to attend the Party in the Park event at Thrapston and had visited the Alan Hudson Day Centre. He commented that he had been very impressed with what he had seen at the Alan Hudson Day Centre and that a press release would be issued by the council in respect of his visit.

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



57/21 Leader of the Council's report

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Hoy, informed members that she had no matters to bring to the council's attention this month.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

58/21 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:

Projects and service delivery

Community Support

The Clerk continues to work with other agencies locally, via the Fenland Diverse Communities Forum, to develop "messages" to encourage people to access Covid-19 vaccinations and to undertake Covid-19 tests. Some key messages from this morning's meeting are:

- the latest figures show that the infection rate in Fenland is 375 per 100,000 population (up from 151 per 100,000 a month earlier); following the national trend
- the cases are spread widely across the district; there are no "hot spot" towns or villages
- the main cause of transmission appears to be through visitors to households.

Officers continue to share other partners' information and undertake "sign posting" to other services/organisations as appropriate.

The Love Wisbech Partnership, which is chaired by the Town Clerk, continues to meet on a regular basis. The partnership includes representatives from Wisbech Town Council, Fenland District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Clarion Futures, Blackfield Creatives, Ferry Project, Oasis Centre, CP Learning Trust, College of West Anglia and Living Sport.

A meeting of the new Strategic Group (of which Wisbech Town Council is a member) had taken place on 16 September 2021 and a meeting of the full partnership is scheduled for 28 September 2021.

The Clerk will keep members updated on how this partnership moves forward and the projects that it will be delivering.

Wisbech Market

Wisbech Market has seen various changes during the last year or so due to the Covid-19 pandemic; the market came out of the third lockdown – during which stalls selling only essential items (or a majority of essential items) were allowed to trade – on 12 April 2021.

Trading levels at Wisbech Market now are generally at the "pre-lockdown" levels. The council has "lost" some traders but has "gained" a similar number of others. One of the new traders is "Greek Corner", selling Greek street food; the trader has decided to be licensed for seven days per week, all year.

The Clerk had been invited to deliver a presentation at a national (via video conferencing) event (on 2 September 2021), hosted jointly by the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), entitled "Markets, the High Street Recovery and



Local Councils". The subject of the Clerk's presentation was "Improving the Market offer" and was warmly received. With just under 80 organisations in attendance at the conference, the Clerk showcased Wisbech Town Council's marketing and media tools and gave an oversight into the general enhancements taking place in the short, medium and long-term; the presentation included details of the council's Market Place enhancements scheme.

In addition, Town Council officers wrote a case study which featured in the 'Local Council Markets Manual'; a booklet disseminated by NABMA after the conference to all attendees. Several other market operators complimented Wisbech Town Council for "setting a very high bar" in terms of its market operations and development.

Market Place enhancements

The council now has secured a total of £350,000 of funding towards the cost of delivering a scheme of enhancement to Wisbech Market Place. The necessary funding agreements between Wisbech Town Council and Cambridgeshire County Council (for £150,000) and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority are in place).

At minute M5/21 the Wisbech Market Place Management Committee decided that one of the tenders received for the delivery of this scheme be accepted, subject to the agreement reached between the Clerk, in liaison with the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Wisbech Market Place Management Committee, and the contractor as to the final details and cost of the works.

A meeting with the successful tenderer (attended by the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of the Wisbech Market Place Management Committee, the Town Clerk and the Design Engineer engaged by the Council) took place on 11 August 2021. Several matters were discussed in relation to delivery of the scheme (including lead-in times for acquisition of construction materials etc). There will be further such meetings. It is proposed currently that work will commence in February of next year.

Regarding the "pedestrianisation" of the Market Place area, the Town Clerk has just received from the Local Highway Authority (LHA) a Pedestrianisation Agreement between Cambridgeshire County Council and Wisbech Town Council; for signature by the Clerk and return to the LHA.

Allotments

The council's allotments remain popular; the council continues to attract additional tenants.

Maintenance works are required to the access roads at both the Waterlees and Cox's Lane sites. Quotations for undertaking remedial works have been sought and are awaited.

An officer of the council gave a live radio interview along with a Dowgate allotment tenant, to coincide with the Allotments Week 2021. This extended interview resulted in a further 25 applications from prospective allotment tenants.

Communications

The Town Council's social media continues to create a high-level presence across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Community events and festivals

The Wisbech Christmas Fayre Steering Group (Chaired by the Town Clerk) met on 8 June 2021 to begin planning for this year's event (on Sunday 12 December 2021). The group is seeking to deliver a public, town centre event but may add some associated on-line activity this year (the on-line



activity which took place in 2020 “in place” of an outdoor event had been well-received). A further meeting had taken place on 10 August and the next one is scheduled for 21 September.

Planning has commenced for this year’s Remembrance Sunday event (on 14 November), through a meeting (involving Councillor Oliver, the Town Clerk and the Chairman of the Wisbech Branch of the Royal British Legion) on 23 June 2021. The intention, at this stage, is to operate the “usual” type of event – parade and a ceremony at the war memorial, followed by a church service. A “run through” meeting, involving all of the “partners” to the event, has been arranged for 7.00 pm on 6 October 2021.

Discussions have begun regarding this year’s Christmas Lights switch-on event (on 28 November). A meeting of the council’s Community Events and Festivals Working Party had been arranged for 27 September 2021 but, because of the subsequent unavailability of certain members, it had been cancelled; a “replacement” meeting will be arranged.

A provisional date of 24 November 2021 has been agreed with the Fenland Citizen newspaper for the launch of the Wisbech Unsung Heroes Awards 2021.

Town Hall/office

Since the Covid-19 lockdown, members of the public have generally not been allowed access to the building. Methods of contact have been by telephone, e-mail or post. This continues operate very well, with no apparent reduction in service to the public. Members of the public who do need to access the building are encouraged to wear a face covering.

In accordance with a decision of the Assets Management Committee some time ago, officers have been investigating, when time has permitted, options for improvement of the council’s telephone system, to provide additional user capacity. As a result of those investigations, IP telephony is in the process of being installed at the Town Hall. This will result in a faster Broadband speed and integration with Microsoft Office 365, with Teams and Business Voice Pro.

Wisbech Castle

Although Wisbech Castle has not re-established regular opening hours, several pre-booked events (including paranormal evenings, escape room events, weddings etc) are taking place.

An Open Day held at Wisbech Castle yesterday attracted more than 100 visitors.

It is hoped that if the number of volunteers could be increased, Wisbech Castle will be able to be open to the public more frequently.

Despite the limited volunteer manpower available currently, internal and external work is still ongoing.

The paving works to the rear garden of Wisbech Castle have now been undertaken; this work has significantly improved the accessibility of Wisbech Castle to those who have mobility problems. Also, a “permanent” portaloo (which is not only accessible to disabled persons but also includes baby-changing facilities) has been sited within the grounds of Wisbech Castle, to improve the situation for those who may find it difficult to access toilet facilities in the house.

A year’s worth of work in the areas to the rear of Wisbech Castle has culminated in a great new area for hire and is already showing signs of increased usage.



Staffing

In accordance with the decision at the meeting of the Staffing and Communications Committee held on 21 June 2021, the functions of the post of Markets and Allotments Officer were being delivered under a contractual arrangement, instead of by the council employing such a member of staff, by the individual who had been delivering some of the “essential” aspects of the role on a temporary basis. The contractor has, however, decided, for health reasons, that he no longer wishes to undertake the allotments aspect of the role. Council officers are giving thought as to how that aspect of the role could be best undertaken.

Correspondence

The Clerk had no items of correspondence to bring to Council’s attention at this time.

59/21 Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of Wisbech Town Council is scheduled for 18 October 2021, to commence at 7.30 pm, at the offices of Wisbech Town Council.

Meeting finished at 9.05 pm.

Signed

Date