



## WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL

24 July 2023 – 7.30 pm

### MINUTES OF MEETING

**Present:** Councillor Human, Chairman (and Town Mayor); Councillors Edwards, Foice-Beard, Hoy, Imafidon, Ketteringham, Meekins, Monger, Oliver, Patrick, Pehlivanova, Rafique, Read, Roy, Sagoo, Tanfield, Tierney and Wallwork.

**Apologies:** None (all members were present).

**Public Participation:** None requested.

#### **30/23 Cambridgeshire Constabulary**

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

Police Inspector Morris attended the meeting; he thanked the Council for inviting him to attend (minute 22/23 refers). He mentioned that he had held his current post for approximately two years and believes that he had developed, during that time, a good understanding of the area and its issues.

The point was made by the Police Inspector that the Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) for Wisbech is small and must focus its activities upon tackling priority issues.

Inspector Morris informed the Council that the three priority areas for the NPT are:

1. Community Engagement
2. Problem Solving
3. Targeted Activity.

The Inspector made the point that tackling drug-related issues falls within all three of the above and he explained the actions that are taken by the Police in that regard.

The Council was informed by Inspector Morris that the NPT has three problem solving plans in place for Wisbech and, as a result, there had been targeted activity in certain parts of the town (including King Street). The Inspector mentioned that the Police locally had undertaken a Closure Order, had made arrests and had issued three warrants under Section 23 of the Drugs Act. He made the point that action is taken as a result of intelligence received and in response to calls from the public; such calls are very small in number; incidents which are witnessed by the public are not always reported.

Inspector Morris gave an assurance that the local Police take very seriously the need to tackle drug-related activity in Wisbech and that officers undertake many hours each week of targeted activity in the town centre.

Councillor Patrick commented that because of work which had been undertaken by the Police, there had been a significant reduction in the amount of anti-social behaviour in Walsoken; he expressed his thanks in that regard. Inspector Morris undertook to pass-on to the officers concerned the thanks of Councillor Patrick.

Councillor Tierney mentioned his awareness of the King Street situation; it had been him who had reported the matter to the Police. He commented that members of the public are witnessing drug



dealing taking place on a daily basis and cannot understand why the perpetrators are not being arrested. They believe that the Police do not undertake action to address “low level” crime. Councillor Tierney commented that there are real concerns regarding the situation in King Street and the public want to know if the Police have a plan to tackle the situation.

In response to Councillor Tierney’s comments, Inspector Morris commented that there is a limit to what can be achieved by a small team of officers and that resources are not always available when needed. He mentioned that the Wisbech Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) would be increased by two PCs in the near future, which should allow the NPT to devote more time to tackling drug-related issues in the town. In addition, he is able to bid for additional resources, if a case can be made, from the Northern Division’s Neighbourhood Support Team (a central resource for Peterborough and Fenland).

Councillor Hoy made the point that she does not wish to “have a go” at the Police but feels that she needs to bring to the attention of the Police any matters of crime and disorder that are of concern to members of the public. She expressed her gratitude to the Police for tackling the begging activities in the town. Councillor Hoy mentioned that she had witnessed drug-dealing in the town in “broad daylight”; this activity is not “hidden”. In addition, she had witnessed youngsters in Wisbech Park smoking “weed”.

Inspector Morris commented that the Constabulary is using whatever resources it can to seek to address the situation. The role of the Police’s Safer Schools Officer is proving very useful in engaging with young people to encourage them to “steer away” from drugs.

Councillor Tierney mentioned that the Town Council is delivering a programme of entertainment on the Market Place on Fridays and Saturdays during July and August. On Friday, one intoxicated individual, to then be accompanied subsequently by others in a similar condition, sat on a bench in the Market Place in close proximity to the entertainment. As a result, members of the public avoided the area. The Police attended and moved-on those individuals.

The opinion was expressed by Councillor Tierney that people do not feel safe in the Market Place and they continue to feel less so. He is of the view that trouble brings more trouble. The public are looking for an assurance that the Police are aware of the situation and have plans to address it.

In response to Councillor Tierney’s comments, Inspector Morris mentioned that he had been able to achieve improved engagement with the Constabulary’s planning team and, consequently, there would be “policing” of large community events (such as the WisBEACH Rock Festival) during the summer. The Inspector asked the Council to share with the Police the details of any events that would be taking place in the town centre.

Councillor Monger commented that he acknowledges that fact that the Police have limited resources and mentioned that he had witnessed a number of motorists acting in an anti-social manner in the town centre.

Inspector Morris mentioned the Safer Streets Survey which is being undertaken and encouraged the submission of responses, so that the Police can gather information in relation to the public’s concerns.

Councillor Human mentioned that he had reported to the Constabulary the frequent drugs “drop-offs” opposite 54 to 60 Elm Road but is not aware as to whether action had been taken in that regard. He expressed his awareness of the lack of Police resources but asked that this situation be investigated.



Inspector Morris thanked members for the supportive manner in which Wisbech Town Council engages with him and his officers and he invited the council to forward to him any issues of crime and disorder of which they become aware in the town.

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

*(Councillor Roy declared his non-pecuniary interest in this item of business, by virtue of him performing the role (in a voluntary capacity) of District Lead for Wisbech Neighbourhood Watch)*

### **31/23 Fenland District Council**

#### **(1) Information**

The Clerk reported that the council's Environment newsletter for the month of June 2023 had been forwarded, on 11 July 2023 by e-mail, to all members of the council.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

#### **(2) Wisbech Park**

Councillor Imafidon mentioned that he had noticed at the weekend that one of the manhole covers in Wisbech Park had collapsed and that the situation had been reported to Fenland District Council (FDC). He expressed the opinion that, given the increased activity in Wisbech Park in the summer (especially the WisBEACH Rock Festival taking place on 6 August), all the manhole covers in the park ought to be inspected by FDC as a matter of priority.

Members decided that the information reported by Councillor Imafidon be noted and the District Council be requested to inspect, as a matter of priority, all the manhole covers in Wisbech Park and, in the interests of public safety, to undertake any actions necessary to remedy any defects that are identified.

### **32/23 Cambridgeshire County Council**

#### **(1) Local Highway Improvement scheme 2023/24 – Mansell Road, Wisbech**

Further to minutes 67/22 (3) and 77/22 (4), the Clerk informed members that Wisbech Town Council's application, under the Local Highway Improvement (LHI) scheme for 2023/24, for the installation of bollards to prevent vehicle parking in the immediate vicinity of 1 Mansell Road had been approved by the Local Highway Authority (LHA).

This application had been assessed as a "non-complex" project. No information had been received from the Local Highway Authority in relation to the two "complex" schemes – for North Brink and Redmoor Lane – which had been submitted by Wisbech Town Council.

The LHA has provided an estimated timeline for implementation of the approved scheme, as follows:

- informal consultation with the applicant – approximately 6 weeks (to 21 August 2023)
- formal consultation - approximately 6 weeks (to 2 October 2023)
- costing of scheme - approximately 6 weeks (to 13 November 2023)
- delivery of scheme - 4 weeks mobilisation plus 12 weeks contractual delivery requirement (to 4 March 2024).



The LHA makes the point that these dates are estimated at this time and could be subject to change as the project progresses. If any changes occur which extend the delivery period further into the future, the LHA will provide, as soon as possible, a revised timeline. Once the design for this scheme has been produced, the Town Council will be consulted, so that it can review the proposal before it is progressed by the LHA to the next stage.

Members decided that the situation be noted.

## **(2) Weed growth on the public highway**

Councillor Hoy, in her capacity as a member of Cambridgeshire County Council, informed members that she had been asked by many people why there are so many weeds in public areas around the town. She commented that this situation had arisen as a result of a decision of the Joint Administration at the County Council earlier this year to no longer undertake cyclic weedkilling (by spraying with weedkiller) to roads, pavements and cycleways.

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

## **(3) Transport Plans**

Councillor Hoy, in her capacity as a member of Cambridgeshire County Council, informed members that, at the last meeting of the County Council, she had questioned the Leader of the County Council about that council's Transport Plans.

Members were informed by Councillor Hoy that the plans seek to reduce the level of car usage across Cambridgeshire, including achieving modal shift, implementing congestion charging and introducing workplace parking levies. The response that had been received by Councillor Hoy from the Leader of the County Council was that such measures are needed to help to reduce climate change.

The point was made by Councillor Hoy that, because of the rurality of the district and the lack of alternative travel options, the people of Fenland need to use cars.

Councillor Tierney commented that he had been warning people about this situation for more than a year. He made the point that the Joint Administration at the County Council wants people not to use cars as a means of travel and those councillors want that situation now. Councillor Tierney commented that there is a proposal to develop 20 minutes neighbourhoods (where everything needed by people would be within a 20 minute travel time); this equates to an anti-car-use measure.

The opinion was expressed by Councillor Tierney that there had never been a greater divide between the "left" and the "right" in the membership of Cambridgeshire County Council. He asked Town Councillors to be aware of the transport proposals as they would, in time, impact upon the local community.

Members decided that the information reported by Councillors Hoy and Tierney be noted.

## **(4) Highway faults**

Councillor Human mentioned that he had reported to the Local Highway Authority (LHA) two separate maintenance issues affecting Elm Road but no action had been undertaken to date to remedy either of the matters. He explained to members the nature of the highway defects.



Members decided that the comments of Councillor Human be noted and that the Clerk would pursue these matters with the Local Highway Authority.

### **33/23 Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 19 June 2023**

Members decided, on the proposal of Councillor Patrick, seconded by Councillor Tierney, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of 19 June 2023 be confirmed and signed.

### **34/23 Minutes of committees**

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

- (1) Planning and Community Infrastructure Committee – 19 June 2023
- (2) Resources Committee – 19 June 2023
- (3) Planning and Community Infrastructure Committee – 10 July 2023
- (4) Resources Committee – 17 July 2023.

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

### **35/23 Wisbech Town Council's accounts and AGAR for 2022/23**

Further to minute 25/23, members considered the Accounting Statement section of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the financial year 2022/23.

The Clerk (and RFO) had circulated to members, in advance of the meeting, a copy of the Accounting Statement section of the Annual Return document with financial information which had been used to produce the AGAR.

Members decided, on the proposal of Councillor Oliver, seconded by Councillor Tierney, that the Accounting Statement section of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the financial year 2022/23 be approved (and signed by the Chairman of the Council), for submission with the remainder of the AGAR document (approved at minute 25/23) to the External Auditor.

*(Councillor Monger requested it be recorded that he abstained from voting on this item of business)*

### **36/23 Wisbech Town Council's Standing Orders**

Members reviewed, at the request of the Leader of the Council, Standing Order 44.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Hoy, reminded members that Standing Order currently reads as follows:

“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. If 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”.

Councillor Hoy proposed that Standing Order 44 be amended to read: “Committees of Wisbech Town Council shall comprise a maximum of seven members of the council. The allocation of members to seats on committees shall be made by the Council (at each Annual Meeting and when



vacancies occur within the municipal year). If a councillor declines the committee seat(s) allocated to him/her by the Council, the re-allocation of that seat (or seats) shall be made by the Council”.

Councillor Hoy’s proposal was seconded by Councillor Edwards.

Members were informed by Councillor Hoy that the reason for proposing this change to Standing Order 44 is to remove the requirement to allocate committee seats on the basis of political proportionality. This requirement can result in vacancies on committees if political groups do not take-up any or all their entitlement. Councillor Hoy made the point that when the Clerk had consulted (following the elections on 4 May 2023 and prior to the Annual Meeting of the Council on 22 May 2023) the Independent members of the Council as to their interest in serving upon committees, he had received no requests to serve upon committees.

Councillor Monger expressed the opinion that, in accordance with Standing Order 81, the Council could not change a Standing Order at this meeting; he commented that Standing Order 81 says “A special resolution permanently to add, vary or revoke a Standing Order shall when proposed and seconded, stand adjourned without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council”.

In response, Councillor Hoy commented that she had studied the Local Government Act 1972 and had discussed the matter with the Town Clerk and it had been concluded that the situation is that Standing Order 81 applies only in cases where a change to Standing Orders had not featured specifically as an agenda item but had been proposed during a debate on another subject at a meeting of the Council.

Councillor Patrick expressed the opinion that this change to Standing Order 44 is because the Conservative members of the Council wish to prevent Independent councillors serving upon committees of the Council.

Councillor Hoy stated that Councillor Patrick’s assertion is untrue. She made the point that if any particular councillor has a desire to serve upon a particular committee, she would be happy for that matter to be considered by the Council.

The Clerk informed members that there is no legal requirement for committees of Town/Parish councils to be appointed on the basis of political proportionality; such a requirement applies only to principal authorities (such as District and County Councils).

Councillor Patrick requested, in accordance with Standing Order 10, the Clerk to undertake a recorded vote in relation to the proposition. The result of such a vote was as follows:

- For: Councillors Edwards, Foice-Beard, Hoy, Human, Imafidon, Ketteringham, Meekins, Oliver, Pehlivanova, Rafique, Sagoo, Tanfield, Tierney and Wallwork (14)
- Against: Councillors Monger, Patrick and Read (3)
- Abstention: Councillor Roy (1).

Members decided, on the proposal of Councillor Hoy, seconded by Councillor Edwards, that Standing Order 44 be amended to read:

“Committees of Wisbech Town Council shall comprise a maximum of seven members of the council. The allocation of members to seats on committees shall be made by the Council (at each Annual Meeting and when vacancies occur within the municipal year). If a councillor declines the committee seat(s) allocated to him/her by the Council, the re-allocation of that seat (or seats) shall be made by the Council”.





### **37/23 Appointment of committees**

Further to minute 13/23 (at which Council appointed its committees for the municipal year 2023/24), members considered a request from the members of Independent Alliance (formed - comprising the four Independent members of the council – since the time of minute 13/23) to re-appoint the membership of committees to reflect the change in the political proportionality of the Council.

Councillor Patrick commented that, given the decision which had been reached at minute 36/23, this item no longer requires consideration. He expressed the opinion that the decision at minute 36/23 demonstrates that the democratic process at Wisbech Town Council is broken.

Councillor Tierney commented that he is bored of hearing statements about the lack of democracy at the Council. He made the point that the Town Council had revised Standing Order 44 in 2019 to allocate seats on committees on the basis of political proportionality but the opportunity to serve on committees had not been taken-up by the independent members of the Council. He added that if a particular councillor would like to serve on a particular committee, that councillor should inform the Leader of the Council of such; She had made the point at minute 36/23 that if any particular councillor has a desire to serve upon a particular committee, she would be happy for that matter to be considered by the Council.

Members decided that the comments of Councillors Patrick and Tierney be noted.

### **38/23 Mayor's report**

The Mayor informed members of the activities and events that he had attended since the last meeting of the council.

Members were informed by the Mayor that he had attended 32 activities and events since the last meeting of the council; these had taken place not only locally but also at Alconbury, King's Lynn and Ramsey.

One of the local events which had been attended by the Mayor had been the Open Day at the Wisbech Community Farm (operated by People and Animals UK CIC). He commented that five years had passed since he had attended the site to witness the planting there of an Oak tree by the Duke of Gloucester and it is great to see how much work had been undertaken by People and Animals UK CIC since that time to develop the site/facility.

Other events which had been attended by the Mayor include:

- the High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire's Garden Party
- both the Preparatory School and Wisbech Grammar School's speech Day
- Thomas Clarkson Academy's Special Achievement Presentation Evening
- Elm Road Primary School's Choral Event, held at the Church of St Peter and St Paul
- the meeting of the Rotary Club at which Toni Bird had been appointed as President; taking-over from Daljit Roy
- a Dew and Doom Day event hosted by the members of the town's Lithuanian community
- an event hosted by the Wisbech 3<sup>rd</sup> Brownies, to celebrate 100 years of that organisation
- all five days of the Wisbech Reads Festival at Wisbech Castle. 502 children had participated in the festival over the five days, which had included activities also at the Wisbech and Fenland Museum and Wisbech Library. Councillor Ketteringham had been present, in his capacity as Volunteer Caretaker at Wisbech Castle, throughout the festival activities at Wisbech Castle and Mayor congratulated him on how he had supported the Wisbech Reads activities which had taken place at Wisbech Castle.



The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Imafidon, for attending 2 events in his stead.

Members decided that the comments of the Mayor be noted.

### **39/23 Leader of the Council's report**

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

- this year's WisBEACH Rock Festival would be taking place on 6 August 2023
- there would be a programme of events in Wisbech Park, for six weeks during the school summer holidays, using Levelling-Up Parks funding which had been secured by Fenland District Council; there would also be a Victorian Wonder Show on 27 August, being funded in the same manner
- the Wisbech Town Centre Committee had arranged Friday and Saturday entertainment on the Market Place
- the most recent weekend had been a very successful but busy one. Councillor Hoy made the point that one lesson learned had been to not deliver too many activities on the same day; with an event on the Market Place, an activity in Wisbech Park and a wedding ceremony at Wisbech Castle – it is easy to over-commit the small “pool” of councillor volunteers!
- the Wisbech Town Centre Committee continues to look at ways of developing the Market Place
- there had been some recent incidents of anti-social behaviour in the Market Place; hopefully, the local Constabulary will be able to address the situation
- the Town Clerk had met recently with the Head of Leisure Services at Fenland District Council to continue discussions regarding the possibility/feasibility of the Town Council taking-on the operation and management of the new pavilion currently under construction at Wisbech Park. It is anticipated that the building will be ready for opening in January 2024
- a number of councillors continue to volunteer at the Salvation Army premises one evening each week to provide hot meals for vulnerable people
- the work to install new play equipment at Wisbech Park is nearing completion
- works to re-develop 24 High Street are underway.

Councillor Wallwork expressed the opinion that none of the events which had been or would be delivered in the town would take place if it were not for the time and effort devoted to such by Councillor Hoy.

Members decided that the information reported by the Leader of the Council be noted.

### **40/23 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**

Council officers continue to share other partners' information and undertake “sign posting” to other services/organisations as appropriate, particularly at a time when life may be getting more difficult for many people. To this end, the Town Clerk attends various meetings, including those of the Wisbech and Villages Charities Network and the Cambridgeshire Financial Capability Forum.

Other “sign posting” and information-sharing (including publicity for cost-of-living events) takes place within the membership of the Love Wisbech partnership, as well as the groups mentioned above.





The council provides financial support to charitable organisations and community groups through use of the Small Grants, Special Grants and Community Support budgets. The allocation of these funds is undertaken by the Resources Committee. The committee's most recent consideration of such matters took place on 17 July 2023.

### **Market Place enhancements**

Given that much of the new surfacing of the Market Place has been in use for a year (following completion of the scheme in July 2022), it would derive benefit from a "deep clean". Council officers are in the process of seeking quotations for this work.

Minor repair/adjustment works to the highway gates which are used to "control" the traffic management arrangements within the Market Place area are being pursued with the Local Highway Authority, as is the installation of a new gate at the Church Terrace entrance to the Market Place.

### **Wisbech Market**

Following various changes during the last couple of years due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Wisbech Market has been operating "as normal" since 12 April 2021 but, in common with trading levels in most town centres, trading has not returned "pre-lockdown" levels.

The level of trading had remained constant over recent months, but the council has "lost" a couple of traders very recently. The general "feedback" from traders is that, although the footfall in the town is relatively high, most people appear to be visiting the town centre for leisure/recreational/social uses, not for retail purposes.

Council officers continue to explore ways of attracting not only market traders for all days of the week but to encourage car booters on Thursdays and Sundays. This is important both in terms of generating income for the council and contributing towards the viability and vibrancy of the town centre.

It is likely that officers will be visiting other markets which are operating relatively locally, to "spread the word" regarding opportunities to trade at Wisbech Market.

At its meeting on 5 June 2023 the Wisbech Town Centre Committee decided to put in place some measures aimed at attracting more traders and potential shoppers to the town.

The measures include operating, for a period of six weeks in the summer, a programme of musical entertainment on Saturdays and other forms of entertainment on Fridays (at various times between 11.00 am and 2.00 pm on each occasion). This programme of entertainment commenced on 21 July (last Friday) and concludes on 26 August 2023.

### **Allotments**

The council continues to receive enquiries in relation to plots at the council's allotment sites.

All the "habitable" plots at the council's allotment sites (at Cox's Lane, Dowgate Road, Waterlees Road, Lynn Road, Southwell Road, Halfpenny Lane and Mile Tree Lane) are now full. A full survey of all allotment sites will take place during August. If there any cases of plots not being cultivated by tenants, officers will contact the tenant(s), with a view to "re-possessing" the plot(s) for re-allocation to those on the waiting list.



With the cost-of-living crisis having an impact upon people's lives, new tenants have been extremely grateful for the opportunity to rent allotments from the council, to enable them to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

### **Community events and festivals**

Planning for this year's WisBeach Rock Festival, which will take place on Sunday 6 August, is almost complete and stall holder bookings are still coming in. Arrangements have been made for the splash pad in Wisbech Park to remain open for a longer period on the day if the weather is suitable.

The production of publicity and promotional material is underway and social media is being actively used to promote the event.

Opportunities to obtain sponsorship and to generate other income to support the cost of this event have been pursued and a recent pledge has been received from Anglian Water.

Councillors and other volunteers had been approached to help steward on the day, but it would be helpful if additional volunteers could be found to "spread the workload".

Wisbech Town Council has been able to access money, via Fenland District Council, from the Government's Levelling-up Parks Fund. This money has been used to meet the costs of delivering, in Wisbech Park, several Dance Fit sessions and Kickboxing sessions on Saturdays in July and August, as well as a Victorian Wonders Show and a magician on 27 August 2023. Funding has also been made available to contribute towards the cost of establishing a Wisbech Parkrun.

This year's Christmas Lights switch-on event – which is likely to follow the usual format of a programme of entertainment etc in the Market Place, concluding with the town's Christmas lights being switched-on – is scheduled for 26 November.

The planning for this year's Wisbech Christmas Fayre (which will take place on Sunday 10 December) has commenced. The arrangements are, as usual, being made by a steering group (Chaired by the Town Clerk) which includes representatives from Wisbech Town Council, Fenland District Council, The Horsefair Shopping Centre, the Library Service, Wisbech Lions, Wisbech Rotary Club, Wisbech and Fenland Museum etc.

The Town Council will, once again, be running the Wisbech Unsung Heroes Awards, with support from the Fenland Citizen, and the aim is to recognise those townspeople who go the extra mile for their community.

Nominations will be sought towards the end of 2023. Those who are shortlisted will be invited to a presentation evening on 27 January 2024 at the Queen Mary Centre.

### **Town Hall/office**

Maintenance work to the Town Hall is undertaken as necessary. A quotation has been obtained from a local roofing contractor to undertake an inspection of the roof; to ascertain whether minor repair works may be required.

### **Toilets**

The toilets at the Horsefair Shopping Centre, which have been open under the management of Wisbech Town Council and operated on behalf of the council by a contractor since 11 July 2022, continue to operate successfully.



Repair works had been required recently to the barrier system in the Gents toilet, but the Council has a maintenance contract in place to address such matters.

From “feedback” received from the council’s contractor, it is clear that most members of the public are very appreciative that the council had taken action to secure the re-opening of these toilets.

### **Wisbech Castle**

Mr Ketteringham continues to perform the role of Volunteer Caretaker very effectively; with excellent communication with office staff and hard work. Council officers have received complimentary feedback from the organisers of a couple of recent events regarding the role that Mr Ketteringham performs for the council.

Following the success of an Open Day event at Wisbech Castle on 9 April, another Open Day will take place on Bank Holiday Monday, 28 August 2023 (between 11.00 am and 2.00 pm. An “Alice Through the Looking Glass” production will be held following the Open Day (commencing at 2.30 pm) and will be a free event for local children.

The work to replace the two damaged radiators has now been completed and other repair works are being undertaken as necessary.

Wisbech Castle was, once again, used as one of the venues for the annual Wisbech Reads Festival, which took place between 10 and 14 July 2023.

At minute T21/22 the Wisbech Town Centre Committee decided to enter-into a tenancy arrangement for the Pump House to be used as a café. Following undertaking improvements, including decoration, to the interior of the building, the tenants opened the café on 6 July with the Mayor present. The tenants have named it Castle Café and have affixed appropriate signage.

Wisbech Castle was visited by two officers of Cambridgeshire County Council (the owner of the building and its grounds) on 21 July 2023. The officers were very impressed with the work which had been undertaken so far to renovate the building and with the Town Council’s ambitions to renovate the building further and they are supportive of the Town Council’s approach to operating the building and making it available to the public.

Bookings for weddings and events for 2024 are now being taken and it is hoped that it will be as busy as 2023.

### **Incinerator**

The Planning Inspectorate is currently undertaking the formal process of examination of the planning application submitted by Medworth CHP Ltd for the construction of a Waste Combined Heat and Power Facility – which has been described also as a mega-incinerator – in Wisbech.

The Town Council has, since it first became aware of the proposal, been committed to OPPOSING the proposed incinerator at every opportunity.

Members will be aware that, to support it with opposing this proposal, the Town Council had engaged an experienced and professional consultant, who had not only helped to prepare the council’s submission to the Planning Inspectorate but would be representing, as appropriate, the Town Council as the application proceeds through the various stages of the Planning Inspectorate’s examination process.



The examination process commenced on 21 February 2023, with a Preliminary Meeting of interested parties, and since that time a number of Issue Specific Hearings and Open Floor Hearings have taken place; the most recent having taken place during week commencing 26 June 2023.

The Examining Authority must complete the Examination of this application by 21 August 2023.

The council had made financial provision of £30,000 to meet the costs of acquiring technical expertise to “fight” the proposal to build an incinerator in Wisbech. Around two-thirds of that money has been spent on the production of the council’s initial submission (of objection) to the Planning Inspectorate, the consultant’s input into three of the Issue Specific Hearings and producing associated documentation on behalf of the council. It is anticipated that the remaining balance will be sufficient to meet the anticipated costs of the specialist consultancy advice and support through to conclusion of the Planning Inspectorate’s examination of this planning application.

### **Land at Somers Road, Wisbech**

The Town Clerk is in the process of securing renewal of the lease (with Cambridgeshire County Council) for the area of land, off Somers Road, adjacent to the Queen Mary Centre, which is used by Wisbech Town Council for the purpose of increasing the amount of car parking provision in the town. A draft version of a new lease has now been received, via the Town Council’s solicitors, by the Town Clerk.

In addition, the Town Clerk has engaged the services of Pathfinder Legal (a partnership of local government legal professionals) to pursue the eviction from this land of the rough sleepers. Pathfinder Legal have now gathered the necessary evidence, which includes witness statements from not only certain statutory agencies but nearby residents, and have submitted the case to Peterborough Crown Court.

In accordance with the decision of the Environment and Public Spaces Committee at minute E10/22, this site has been in use since 5 June 2023 by Fenland District Council’s contractor (for a period of 77 weeks) as the works compound in association with the re-development of 24 High Street, Wisbech. That arrangement is covered by way of a licence agreement between Wisbech Town Council (as lessee of the land) and Fenland District Council (as the client for the re-development scheme).

### **Christmas lights**

Discussions have begun regarding plans for the council’s 2023 Christmas lights display. Regular meetings, involving Councillor Wallwork, the Town Clerk and appropriate representatives of the council’s installation contractor, have commenced. The second of those meetings took place earlier today.

The initial discussions relate to identifying and checking the operation of the associated electrical supplies and other necessary infrastructure.

### **Correspondence**

#### **Cambridgeshire Search and Rescue (CamSAR)**

The Town Clerk had received a letter from the Fundraising Officer at CamSAR thanking Wisbech Town Council for the grant of £150, which had been awarded by the council’s Resources Committee (from the Small Grants budget) at minute R6/23.



In the letter, the point is made that the CamSAR relies heavily upon grants and, therefore, the organisation is very appreciative of the funding from Wisbech Town Council. The assurance is given that the financial support from the council will be used as a contribution towards the cost of purchasing specialised equipment to assist water-based research technicians in performing their searches more efficiently and effectively.

Members decided that the content of the letter be noted.

### **Wisbech Parkrun**

The Town Clerk had received a letter – which he read to members - from the Joint Event Directors of the Wisbech Parkrun, expressing the thanks of the organising committee to Wisbech Town Council (WTC) for the funding of £413 which had been allocated from the Levelling-up Parks Fund monies that WTC had secured from Fenland District Council. The funding would be used to purchase the necessary communications equipment.

Councillor Meekins informed members that arrangements for the Adult Parkrun are “coming together” and that there would be a “dress rehearsal” immediately following a forthcoming a Junior Parkrun. There would then be a “soft” launch day. He undertook to provide publicity (when produced) to the council, for sharing with the public.

Members decided that the content of the letter and the comments of Councillor Meekins be noted.

### **41/23 Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting of Wisbech Town Council is scheduled for 4 September 2023, to commence at 7.30 pm, at the offices of Wisbech Town Council.

**Meeting finished at 8.35 pm.**

Signed .....

Date .....