

DISS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the **Town Council** held online on **Wednesday 15th July 2020** at **8pm.**

Present: Councillors S. Browne (ex-officio)
D. Collins
M. Gingell
S. Kiddie
A. Kitchen
J. Mason
S. Olander (ex-officio)
D. Poulter
J. Robertson
E. Taylor
S. Warren
J. Welch

In attendance: Sarah Richards, Town Clerk
Sonya French, Deputy Town Clerk
Alex Jamieson, Responsible Finance Officer
County / District Councillor Kiddie
1 member of the public

FC0720/01 TO CONSIDER APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Howard.

FC0720/02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

Minute No.	Councillors Name	Personal/Other Interest	Pecuniary Interest	Reason
FC0720/06	D. Collins S. Kiddie S. Olander	X		These councillors are members of the Diss Community Team who have presented proposals

FC0720/03 MINUTES

It was

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 17th June 2020 were confirmed and as a true record and will be signed with the Clerk post meeting.

FC0720/04 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Councillors considered a resolution under Standing Orders 3d to 3h to suspend the meeting to receive reports from the County and District Councillors, on behalf of the Police, and to hear comments from members of the public on items to be discussed on the agenda. County and District Councillor gave apologies on behalf of District Councillor Minshull. He reported that he has stood down from his Cabinet position at South Norfolk Council as he is about to become Chairman of Norfolk County Council. Social distancing has made highways repairs challenging. The drains on Walcot Road have therefore been marked up for future repair when two or three men can lift them and similarly, Uplands Way is scheduled to be resurfaced. The trees and hedges along Frenze Hall Lane have been cut back and yellow lines have been laid on Nelson Road & Sawmills Road with additional station access progressing as a long-term project. The pedestrian refuge on the A1066 in Roydon is unlikely to go ahead as what was requested was a zebra crossing and the traffic density versus footfall would not warrant it at an approximate cost of £2.5m.

There was a query regarding the refurbishment of the Diss leisure centre and delayed re-opening until September given that it has been closed since March and that works were carried out less than two years ago. It was also noted that the T bars on the end of the yellow lines on Sawmills Road need to be added. Councillor Kiddie agreed to follow up on these two matters and congratulations and thanks were extended to him for his appointment and his SNC service to date.

(Action: KK; by 31.07.20)

FC0720/05

ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

It was noted that a consultation regarding an updated Members Code of Conduct is underway and the link to the survey would be circulated to all members and officers for completion by 17th August.

There was also the issue of young people cycling dangerously in Mere Street. It was noted that this issue has been Highlighted to Norfolk Constabulary already and that this should be followed up and brought to the next Infrastructure meeting.

(Action: Clerk / SO; by 21.10.20)

FC0720/06

DISS COMMUNITY TEAM

(a) Members received information from the Diss Community Team regarding its remit. Alan Franks, its Chair explained that the Group started from the Town Team with a sub events group, which has now consolidated into one with the objective of making Diss a better place to live, work and visit akin with the Council's mission. The Group is constituted, now a Community Interest Company and registered with Companies House. They do not have an income stream, but funds have been preserved over the years and have been previously used to seed fund events such as the Cyclathon, Heritage Transport Fayre and Organ festival with the idea of becoming self-sustaining. The focus has moved to the demise of the high street and empty shops.

(b) Councillors considered a proposal to install window coverings on empty shop fronts in the town centre. It was noted that the re-opening of the town centre had resulted in a discussion with South Norfolk Council regarding window coverings. The Diss Community Team in conjunction with the Town Council wrote to premises early 2020 to ask them to improve the appearance of their buildings. Alan has identified the number of windows for coverings and been liaising with the landlords / tenants of empty shops to acquire permissions. The project has been divided into two stages – Stage One involves the Market Place with the former Beales and Hopgoods buildings which total 20 windows with Stage Two a similar number. It was noted that four of the empty shops have tenants lined up i.e. previously Mere Moments, McColls, the William Hill betting shop and the flower shop on Market Hill.

The design content is to focus on Diss' past, present and future with a consistent theme throughout the entire town and to be extended from the Triangle. It was agreed that the proposed drawings would be sent. High quality descriptive photos are being used to tell a story and attract people to visit Diss with the aim of promoting the availability of products throughout Diss but will remain generic without mention of specific shop names.

There was a question regarding whether the former TIC photos would be replaced but it was noted that the refurbishment works are starting to that building as well as the toilets from 27th July and that stage two could pick up loose ends.

Members discussed the potential to re-use the coverings when empty buildings become filled given the work that goes into producing and printing the artwork and it was agreed that this option would be investigated when the sample is provided. It was noted that the cost of the printing is approximately £50 per window and that there are a wide range of window sizes and surrounding frames to consider. The impact of the display extending to the full size of the windows was discussed and the requirement for it to look slick and professional. DCT is working with an experienced and knowledgeable Graphic Designer who has been used previously and is cooperative.

There was a request to consider the building at the top of Roydon Road, which is in poor condition, but it was noted that the focus is from St Nicholas Street down. There was discussion regarding the Council's financial contribution given the contribution of £1k from South Norfolk Council, their remit to support businesses and the funds they received to help support market towns in re-opening post Covid. Members also discussed the involvement of local agents, landlords and tenants in supporting this project as well as improving the appearance of the buildings they manage.

It was noted that the DCT was hoping to get the project off the ground quickly, that a significant amount of work had already gone into it and that it could take months to get agreement from other parties to support the project financially. There was a suggestion that funds from other parties could be sought for stage two and that the project should be publicised in advance. There was also a question regarding utilising DCT funds towards the project particularly as its original funds were provided for market town initiatives.

RESOLVED: to contribute up to £2k towards the installation of window coverings in the empty town centre premises with the Town Clerk to have delegated authority to approve

the final design / material proposals alongside other Town Council members of the Diss Community Team.

(Action: Clerk/RFO/DCT representatives; immediately)

FC0720/07 **FINANCE**

- (a) Members noted payment of accounts for June.
- (b) Councillors received the summary of income & expenditure including Earmarked Reserves for the month ending June 2020.
- (c) Members received the summary of Earmarked Reserves for the month ending June 2020.

FC0720/08 **ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2019/20**

- a) Members considered the annual accounts for the financial year to 31st March 2020. The RFO, Finance team and all staff were thanked for their work. It was

RESOLVED: to approve the annual accounts for the financial year to 31st March 2020.

(Action: RFO; immediately)

- b) Councillors received the Council's Internal Audit report for the financial year to 31st March 2020.

FC0720/09 **ANNUAL AUDIT 2019/20**

- (a) Members considered the Annual Internal Audit report of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.

- (b) Council considered Section 1 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.

- (c) Councillors considered section 2 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.

RESOLVED: to approve the Annual Internal Audit report and Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.

(Action: RFO; immediately)

FC0720/10 **COVID-19 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TEAM**

Members received an update from the Covid-19 Acknowledgement Team and considered initial plans. It was noted that the working group has met once with another meeting scheduled for next week. Members are investigating options for installing a beacon in the Park as a symbol of light, hope, and remembrance, acknowledging acts of altruism and use of a candle in windows for an event on New Year's Eve. It was also noted that as opportunities for exercise have been synonymous with lockdown, that a town walk / trail is being planned. There was a request to circulate the email regarding the beacon design to all and it was agreed that the notes of the meetings should be circulated going forwards.

(Action: Clerk/CV-19 working group; by 24.07.20)

FC0720/11 **TOWN CENTRE PREMISES**

Council considered what action can be taken regarding the condition of some of the town centre premises. It was noted that the letter distributed to all building owners/tenants' early part of the year could not be followed up due to CV-19 and that coordination with the work of the Diss Community Team should avoid duplication. It was also noted that the Town Council had previously tried to set up a Mere Street traders' group to work alongside the Heritage Triangle Traders but that only a few meetings took place. The Clerk had also contacted the agent responsible for several empty buildings and that this correspondence had been passed on to the Diss Community Team for follow up. It was agreed that the Clerk would follow up on this at a meeting with a representative of Broadland District Council and the Chair of the DCT next week and that County/District Councillor Kiddie would investigate the enforcement side of the matter.

(Action: Clerk / KK; by 09.09.20)

FC0720/12 **PROGRESS REPORT**

Members noted progress on decisions made at the last meeting of Council. It was noted that the Chair has been approached by three people regarding the last remaining councillor vacancy.

FC0720/13 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted that the next meeting of Full Council is scheduled for Wednesday 16th September 2020.

FC0720/14

PUBLIC BODIES

Councillors resolved under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 and Standing Orders 1c to exclude members of the public and press in order to discuss the following item, which is properly considered to be of a confidential nature.

FC0720/15

NUNNERY WALL

Council received advice from the Council's solicitor regarding the Nunnery Wall. It was explained that the Title Deed shows an indication of where Land Registry believe the boundary lies but it is not definitive and extraneous evidence demonstrating that the line is in the incorrect place may result in an amendment.

Members strongly believe that the wall collapse was caused by the renovation works, removal of support buttresses from the wall and construction traffic accessing the site, therefore the current owner should be responsible for costs of the wall rebuild.

There was discussion regarding the fact that the Town Council had not been approached prior to an application being submitted to the LPA and before the rebuilding of the wall despite claims that the wall belongs to the Council and subsequently the Council had only commented by way of the planning application process.

It was noted that it has not been possible to acquire evidence of prior ownership from the last owner, however further discussions are underway. It was

RESOLVED: That the Council's solicitor will seek to acquire evidence of ownership of the Nunnery wall from a third party.

(Action: Clerk/SO; immediately)

Meeting Closed: 10.17pm.

Councillor Browne
TOWN MAYOR