

Minutes of the extra ordinary Meeting of the Harworth and Bircotes Town Council held on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 1.15pm at the Town Hall, Scrooby Road, Bircotes, DN11 8JP.

**Present:** Cllr Evans (Chair), Cllr Flynn, Cllr James, Cllr Hughes, Cllr Jones, Cllr S Harrison and Cllr A Harrison

**Others:** Mrs Davies ( Officer) K Tarburton (Community Development & Funding Manager)

**17603 To approve apologies and reasons for absence**

At this point, the Chair reported that Cllr Steve Barns has resigned from the Town Council – the Officer to inform the District Council.

Cllr Hughes proposed to approve apologies and reasons for absence from Cllr Schuller, Cllr Sidwells, Cllr Smith and Cllr Whitehead; this was seconded by Cllr Flynn and resolved by the Council.

**17604 To receive Declaration of Interest on any item on the agenda**

No Declaration of Interests received.

**17605 To suspend the meeting to hold a public session**

No members of the public present.

**17606 To consider and approve the Community Ownership Fund application which is to take ownership of assets at risk of loss in your community**

Mrs Tarburton, the Community Development and Funding Manager explained that there is an opportunity for the Town Council to take ownership of two Community Centres currently owned by Bassetlaw District Council; these are:

- Beverley Road - closed and in need of repair/refurbishment
- Devonshire Road – still currently operating

These centres would continue to be centres for the community, Devonshire Road would continue as it is, and Beverley Road could be brought back into use as an Education Centre.

The Manager informed the Town Council that an Expression of Interest (EOI) had been submitted to the Community Ownership Fund and this has been approved. The EOI was for the sum of £300k; and the Town Council would need to put in 20% match funding which could be made up of In-Kind contributions as well as financial. However, due to the elections this funding has been postponed and the Manager is seeking approval to submit a full application once the funding is open again, but wanted the Council to note this is not guaranteed.

Cllr James proposed to approve the submission of a Community Ownership Fund application; this was seconded by Cllr S Harrison and resolved by the Council.

Also attached to this application, the Town Council would be required to include costings and the Manager would like approval to instruct an architect to carry out this work.

Cllr Hughes proposed that the Town Council appoints an architect to provide costings for the repairs; this was seconded by Cllr A Harrison and resolved by the Council.

**17607 To consider the end of year financial reports for 2023-24**

The Officer has previously circulated the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 financial reports for the Councillors to view.

Cllr S Harrison proposed to approve the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 end of year financial reports; this was seconded by Cllr Jones and resolved by the Council.

**17608 To receive and note the Internal Audit Report for the year 2023-24**

The Officer previously circulated copies of the interim and final audit reports and AGAR audit report for the councillors to consider. The Officer also explained the reasons for a 'No' response to assertion four and the next steps being taken to improve the accessibility of the website to prevent this happening again. It is also noted that the day for the commencement date of the exercise of public rights is the day following the announcement date.

Cllr Flynn proposed to accept the Internal Audit Reports and the reason for the 'No' to assertion four and the next steps forward to improve the access to the website; this was seconded by Cllr A Harrison and resolved by the Council.

**17609 To consider the Annual Governance Statement for the year 2023-24**

The Officer previously circulated information for each of the assertions so that Councillors can consider their responses. Due to the comments in the Internal Audit Report as discussed above; a 'No' response was given under number 4 assertion.

Assertion 4: *We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of elector's rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations*

Explanation 1: The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) correctly provided the correct 30 days for the exercise of elector's right from 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023 to 14<sup>th</sup> July 2023 ; however, there was confusion with the wording for the starting of the 30 days following the date of announcement on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023.

The RFO read that –' (a) insert date of placing of the notice which must be not less than 1 day before the date (c) which was the 24 June) meant it was to be at least one clear day between the two dates; the Internal Auditor explained that it meant the day following the announcement.

Next Steps: For 2023-24 and future years, it is noted that the commencement dates should start the day after the date of the announcement notice publication.

Explanation 2: Following the receipt of the External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2022-23; the RFO submitted it to be put on the website on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 2023 (the deadline being 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023). Unfortunately, this did not happen, as the website had not been checked and a screen print taken, which is what usually happens.

Next Steps: The website is currently undergoing an update with a more user-friendly way to put documents on the site. This will then allow the RFO to put the items on the website herself instead of relying on third parties.

Cllr Jones proposed to approve the Annual Governance Statements and explanation as above; this was seconded by Cllr Flynn and resolved by the Council.

**17610 To consider the Accounting Statements for the year 2023-24**

To Officer previously circulated the Accounting Statements for the Councillors to consider.

Cllr Hughes proposed to approve the Accounting Statements for 2023-24; this was seconded by Cllr S Harrison and resolved by the Council.

**17611 The Responsible Finance Officer to set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights**

The Officer reported that the announcement date for the Notice of Public Rights and publication of unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 will be on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2024 and the 30 days inspection period will be from Monday 24 June to Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2024.

Cllr S Harrison proposed to note the commencement dates as above; this was seconded by Cllr A Harrison and resolved by the Council.

**17612 To consider the Town Hall's Internet Improvement options**

The Councillors received information regarding options to improve the internet connection for the Town Hall. The poor connection has been causing problems for years to the point now that staff cannot carry out their work and room hire customers cannot access the internet to carry their activities.

After consideration of the options, Cllr Hughes proposed to approve installation of a direct line to the Town Hall which guarantees internet connection; this is over a 5-year term at a monthly cost of £435.00; this was seconded by Cllr Jones and resolved by the Council.

**17613 To consider additional funding for the Neighbourhood Plan Review**

The Officer reported that the Neighbourhood Plan Review funding application was only successful with half of the required funding due to taking into account funding received in 2017; this will leave a short fall of approximately £5,000 plus consultation event costs.

After consideration, Cllr James proposed to use the events budget and ear marked reserves to facilitate the completion of the Neighbourhood Plan Review; this was seconded by Cllr A Harrison and resolved by the Council.

**17614 To review Councillor's responsibilities**

Councillor's Responsibilities for 2024-25:

Finance Committee: Cllr Evans, Cllr Jones, Cllr Flynn, Cllr Smith and Cllr James

HR Committee: Cllr Evans, Cllr Jones, Cllr Wratten, Cllr James and Cllr Flynn

The Cemetery, Health & Safety Committees were removed.

Cemetery Inspections: Tickhill Road Cemetery – Cllr Scott; Styrrup Road Cemetery – Cllr Jones

Cllr Hughes proposed to approve the above responsibilities; this was seconded by Cllr Flynn and resolved by the Council.

**17615 To review representatives for external groups**

Cllr Jones proposed the representative for the Tenants & Residence Association will be shared with Cllr Flynn and Cllr S Harrison; this was seconded by Cllr James and resolved by the Council.

**17616 To consider additional person to access to the Unity Trust account for setting up payments and Access to statements**

Cllr A Harrison proposed to include Helen Rodger to access the Unity Trust bank account to allow the setting up of suppliers, payments ready for Councillors to authorise and printing off bank statements only, this was seconded by Cllr S Harrison and resolved by the Council.

**17617 Time and date of the next Town Council meeting.**

The next scheduled Town Council meeting is the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 at 7.15pm in the Town Hall, Scrooby Road, Bircotes, DN11 8JP.