

Minutes of the Harworth & Bircotes Town Council Zoom meeting held on Monday 21st December 2020, at 7pm.

Present: Cllr Evans (Chair), Cllr Barns, Cllr Dobson, Cllr Fear, Cllr Flynn, Cllr Schuller, Cllr Smith and Cllr Wratten

Others: Wendy Davies (Officer) and Karen Tarburton (Community Development & Funding Officer)

16968 To receive and approve any apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllr Jones, Cllr Dean and Cllr James.

Cllr Fear proposed to accept the above apologies; this was seconded by Cllr Dobson and resolved by the Council.

16969 To receive Declaration of Interests on any item on the agenda

Declaration of Interest received from Cllr Schuller regarding agenda item 16974.

16970 To suspend the meeting to hold a public session and receive Police reports, County and District Councillor reports

- PC Martin sent his apologies and submitted his report which was circulated around the Councillors
- District Cllr Challinor sent his apologies
- District Councillors June Evans and Lynne Schuller both circulated their District Council reports; no questions raised

16971 To approve the minutes of the meeting held 16th November 2020

Cllr Barns proposed to accept the minutes of the meeting held 16th November 2020 as a true record, this was seconded by Cllr Fear and resolved by the Council. The Chair duly signed the minutes.

16972 To receive Chair's report

The Chair gave her report as attached.

16973 To receive the cemetery health & safety inspections

Cllr Barns gave his cemetery inspection reports; no H&S actions required.

The Officer reported that the two trip hazards have been repaired and the broken fence panel has been removed. There is also an increase in fly tipping in the cemeteries and cemetery bins. One address has been retrieved as evidence from items put in the cemetery bin – this is to be passed on to the Environment Enforcement team.

16974 To consider any planning applications listed and note any appeals and planning correspondence

Application: 20/01349/VOC

Proposal: Variation of condition 1 and 2 on PA 17/01575/REF – reserved matters application following outline PA 61/09/00052 to erect 125 residential dwellings including associated parking, landscaping and infrastructure – house substitution to 13 No. plots and material amendments

Location: Land at Scrooby Road, Harworth

Application: 20/01639/HSE

Proposal: proposed two-storey side extension

Location: 38 Rutland Drive, Harworth

Cllr Barns proposed not to make any objections to the above applications; this was seconded by Cllr Fear and resolved by the Council.

Cllr Schuller did not take place in the above agenda items.

16975 To approve payments and receive the financial report

Cllr Flynn proposed to approve the payments as attached; this was seconded by Cllr Dobson and resolved by the Council.

At this point a member of the public joined the meeting.

The Officer previously circulated copies of the finances as of 30th November 2020, bank statement and budget figures for the Councillors to view.

Cllr Flynn proposed to note the finances as above; this was seconded by Cllr Smith and resolved by the Council.

16976 To consider the draft budget for 2021/22

The Officer went through the draft budget, making suggestions as well as the Council. Various items were noted and discussed; the accountant will be signing off the accounts up to the end of December on the 19th January; so we will have an accurate update then to work with for the precept.

Cllr Flynn proposed to note that the draft budget has been discussed; this was seconded by Cllr Fear and resolved by the Council.

16977 To review Financial Regulations

The Officer previously circulated copies of the Financial Regulations for the Councillors to view.

Following the review and agreement of some amendments, Cllr Flynn proposed to approve the amended Financial Regulation; this was seconded by Cllr Dobson and resolved by the Council.

16978 Time and date of the next Town Council meeting

The next Town Council meeting will be held via Zoom on the 25th January 2021 at 7pm.

The Chair closed the meeting at 7.55pm.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Dec. 21st 2020

At this time of year, I normally reflect on the past 12 months and what has been achieved; however, 2020 has been dominated by Covid-19, and it looks as if the situation will continue into 2021.

The Restrictions have had a significant impact on the Council.

- The closure of the Town Hall has resulted in a cessation of all public and group activities, which further contributes to social isolation for some residents.
- Town Councillors have had to learn new skills, such as participating in virtual meetings.
- As for those other local authorities we normally work with and rely on, initially their communication and working links were disrupted because of staff illness, and delays to the work cycle became obvious.
- However, since then, they have made major changes to their normal working practice and enabled staff to work virtually from home.

In other words, a 'new' normal working is now in place.

So, What Has Been Achieved? Despite the initial difficulties for all organisations and subsequent delays to some plans and deferment of others, Council has made some progress:

- The local market – this should have appeared in Spring, it was delayed until Autumn, and then came new restrictions limiting what could be sold. Few people understand the amount of work and negotiations with Bassetlaw District Council required to deliver this – my thanks go to those involved and who made it happen.
- The local environment – despite the difficulties, the Civic Square has been replanted, and plans are in place to create a new planted interest on the grassed area opposite the Civic Square.
- Normal services maintained. Yes, the Town Hall had to be closed local residents but publicly we still emptied bins, picked up litter, maintained the cemeteries; behind the scenes office staff continued to answer calls, deal with queries, write reports, produce agendas, negotiate with other organisations, participate in meetings and overall, manage the workload
...we as Councillors recognise the input from all staff.

Financial Impact on the Town Council is something we have had to deal with:

- Loss of income from hire of the Hall has meant a reduced income stream not anticipated in the 2021 budget.
- However, the Town Clerk has been involved in her own battle with utility companies about their charges, and has had some success in reducing expenditure.

Overall, we have managed the situation well.

What About 2021/22? We don't know how long we will be working under the current or new restrictions due to this pandemic; this means we cannot anticipate when life will return to normal and when we can open the Town Hall.

However, there is some good news:

- Highways have confirmed there have been no objections to the installation of a zebra crossing from the shops to the car park; work should start early Feb. (weather permitting)
- Highways are now discussing options with regards to the Scrooby Road/A614 junction.
- I have been in conversation with Harworth Group, who intend submitting plans for Phase 2 Development of the Colliery Site. They also assured me that plans to mothball the site no longer apply, which is good news for 1) the local economy, 2) regeneration of the town centre, and 3) the Neighbourhood Plan which needs to be reviewed **but now does not** need to be re-written.
- I have also been contacted by a Housing Association Developer interested in the Colliery Site; I referred him to Bassetlaw District Council Housing who are now discussing with him the need for affordable housing and accommodation for tenants 'over 60'.

Financially, life is going to be challenging for the Town Council.

- We have to manage without income gained from hire of the Town Hall by local groups, nor do we know how long this situation will continue, or even if the groups will re-start, when able.
- We have received notice from Weight Watchers and Slimming World – they will not be returning to the Town Hall. This means Council will lose a regular income stream.
- There will be a need to find other groups wishing to hire the Hall.
- In the meantime, the 2021/22 budget will have to be planned with caution, based on the assumption of **nil income** from hire charges.

It's important not to forget the community. We have seen individuals, groups and organisations initiate support to local residents in need, be that need for food, financial help, or social contact. We sometimes get blurred vision because of problems, complaints and criticism, but this community showed a very positive approach when it was needed.

Finally, I thank you all for your support and input during this difficult year; I wish you and those you love a safe and Happy Christmas and New Year.

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