

Minutes of the Harworth & Bircotes Town Council meeting held on Monday 11th April 2022, at 6.30pm at the Town Hall, Scrooby Road, Bircotes, DN11 8JP.

Present: Cllr Smith (Chaired the meeting), Cllr Wrattton, Cllr James, Cllr Jones and Cllr Flynn

Others: W Davies (Officer) T Karburton (Community Development and Funding Manager) County Cllr Sheila Place plus one member of the public

17203 To receive and approve any apologies and reasons for absence

Apologies and reasons received from Cllr Evans, Cllr Schuller, Cllr Barns, Cllr Dean, Cllr Fear. Cllr Flynn proposed to approve the apologies and reasons, this was seconded by Cllr Jones and resolved by the Council – 5 votes

17204 To receive Declaration of Interests on any item on the agenda

No declarations of interests received.

17205 To suspend the meeting to hold a public session and receive Police, County and District Councillor reports

County Councillor Sheila Place gave her report on varies road repairs.

District Councillor June Evans previously circulated her District report which is at the end of this minutes.

17206 To approve the minutes of the meeting held 28th February 2022

Cllr Jones proposed to accept the minutes of the meeting held 28th February 2022 as a true record; this was seconded by Cllr Flynn and resolved by the Council – 5 votes.

17207 To receive the Chair's report

The Chair's report was circulated around the Council.

The Chair proposed the following items which have been included on the agenda for consideration or an update;

- A Food Bank for Harworth and Bircotes
- Update on the Town Centre Master Plan
- Review of the Neighbourhood Plan

Accessibility Survey of the Town Centre

Thank you to everyone who was able to reply to my email about this proposal; the result was very positive.

The result is the Town Council is working in partnership with Bassetlaw District Council in order to support local businesses; as you know, the outcome will be particularly useful to visitors with disabilities.

Summer Planting: Update

I am assured by staff that the rabbits are still around, so a re-think has been necessary.

The plan is that instead of planting up the areas around the Civic Square, we will make a frame that will sit at a tilted angle, filled with red, white and blue flowers. This will be sited on the raised grassed area in front of the carpark. I believe this will be highly visible to all who use that part of Scrooby Road.

17208 To receive the cemetery health & safety inspections

Cllr Barns not present to give a report.

17209 To receive an update on the Harworth Master Plan

Karen Tarburton has met with the Master Plan consultant today. Additional information is currently being included to the final draft version and will be ready in a couple of weeks. At this point, the draft plan will be ready to go out for further consultation. The consultation for the Master Plan will be District Council Officer led; not the Town Council led at this stage.

17210 To consider the award from the Changing Places application

Bassetlaw District Council's Changing Places application is a partnership application which involved four changing places facilities in total.

- Langold Country Park
- Rhubarb Farm
- Harworth and Bircotes Town Council
- Retford Train Station

Unfortunately, the whole amount that was requested was not awarded; the amount awarded was £40,000, which equates to each project receiving £10,000. Each facility project costs were over £60,000 (the amount requested was approx. £200,000). However, within the guidelines of the funding those areas that didn't receive the full funding amount are able to put it towards delivering fewer facilities.

Therefore, as the whole amount wasn't awarded each organisation has been approached to see if they would be able to deliver their project within this financial year if they were awarded £10,000. The deadline to respond to the District Council who is the lead organisation is April 22nd 2022.

For Harworth & Bircotes – the amount that the Town Council would have contribute towards the delivery this project would be £50,000; which has to be completed by next March.

The Town Council does not have these funds to deliver the project; therefore, it suggested that the £10,000 goes towards the District Council's project. This funding cannot be used for anything else; only the Changing Places facilities.

After discussion, Cllr Jones proposed to allow the District Council to use the funds awarded to the Town Council to another project where it feels would be more beneficial; this was seconded by Cllr Wratten and resolved by the Council – 5 votes.

17211 To consider a food bank for the Harworth & Bircotes area

Cllr Evans would like to propose that the Town Council considers setting up a satellite Food Bank Collected Centre in the Town Hall; this would operate under the umbrella of the Bassetlaw Foodbank. All donations will be collected by the Central Food Bank, who deliver boxes of food daily to residents in Harworth & Bircotes

Supporting information

- Inflation is rising – from 6.2% in February, now approaching 7.7%, and predicted to be 8.7% at the end of the year
- Inflation is being driven by higher gas prices (expected to rise a further 54% in October), plus increased prices for fuel, food and other goods.
- This means your money/take-home pay will buy less; experts say this will result in a £1,100 loss in ‘real income’ to the average salary.
- Many people are already struggling; the expectation is that by next year 1.3m people will fall into ‘absolute poverty’.

This is really worrying - already the price of staple food products bought by every family, such as bread, pasta, fresh fruit and veg. (potatoes have risen by 17% in price) dairy and meat products, has risen.

Cllr Evans and Karen Tarburton have started preliminary discussions, simply to determine if this proposal is feasible.

The Food Bank management is very happy that the Town Council wants to offer support; if Council approves, they will deliver a food bin for local residents to donate food – this will be collected whenever we notify them.

You may be wondering – why not operate our own food bank?

Every referral is triaged by the central foodbank staff – this means individuals or families receive food to meet their assessed need.

Food is delivered to rural areas by an electric van and since using this, staff have noticed a rise in requests; the reason is thought to be because it ensures anonymity.

The Town Council is not in a position to receive referrals, triage residents or make anonymous deliveries.

After discussion, Cllr James proposed that the Town Council has a collection point for donations of food for the foodbank; this was seconded by Cllr Flynn and resolved by the Council – 5 votes.

17212 To Consider the Town Council's vote for the North Notts Business Improvement District

The Officer read out a list of funding received from the North Notts Bid; to carry out community events and assistance for Harworth & Bircotes.

Cllr Smith proposed to vote in favour for the North Notts Business Improvement District at their election; this was seconded by Cllr Jones and resolved by the Council – 5 votes.

17213 To approve payments and receive the financial reports as of 28th February 2022

The Officer previously circulated a list of payments and financial reports, bank statements, budget and any variances for the councillors to view.

Cllr James proposed to approve the payments and financial reports as listed; this was seconded by Cllr Flynn and resolved by the Council – 5 votes.

Two councillors initialled and dated the bank statement balances which are in line with the report balance.

During this item, the Officer reported on the gas and electric companies that are asking if the Town Council would like them to review its gas and electric rates – this comes with a commission cost which the Officer would like to avoid. The alternative would be to approach the company that was used before which is free of charge through the North Notts Business Improvement District scheme – the Officer will approach these and arrange for a review.

17214 To consider any planning applications as listed and planning correspondence

Application: 22/00227/FUL

Proposal: First floor extension over existing offices

Location: Vae UK Ltd, Snape Lane, Harworth

Consideration: No objections

Application: 22/00231/COU

Proposal: Change of use of land to garden amenity space

Location: Land adjacent to 11 Sandymount West, Harworth

Consideration: No objections

Application: 22/00295/FUL

Proposal: Erect commercial units for general industry/storage and distribution/offices (B2/B8/R(g) use Class). Construct new accesses and associated car parking and service yard areas

Location: Plot A4 Lords Wood Road, Harworth

Consideration: No objections

Application: 22/00240/HSE

Proposal: Construction of single storey rear extension and two storey extension over garage

Location: 14 Galway Mews, Harworth

Consideration: No objections

Cllr James proposed not to make any objections; this was seconded by Cllr Jones and resolved by the Council – 5 votes.

17215 To consider being part of the Neighbourhood Plan pilot project led by District Council Officers

The Chair read out the following report from Cllr Evans.

The current Neighbourhood Plan, completed in 2015, is overdue for a review. The proposal is that we now start the review process.

Why bother? The longer the period it is considered ‘overdue’, the longer we leave it, the less weight it carries in influencing planning decisions.

Background

- The Neighbourhood Plan. was effective in supporting the planning decision to develop the brownfield Harworth Colliery site now known as Simpson Park. The Neighbourhood Plan continues to be valued by Harworth Group and prospective developers of that site: it is always included in planning applications relating to Simpson Park, and potential developers and Harworth Group continue to meet/update the Town Council about new proposals.
- The Neighbourhood Plan was key to the Planning Inspector’s decision to uphold the District Council decision to refuse development on land on Blyth Road; I can confirm that I was questioned about the Neighbourhood Plan during the Appeal Hearing.
- The developments by Barratts, Persimmon and Gleeson could not be stopped in planning terms, because the sites had previously been allocated for housing development well before Neighbourhood Plans were introduced. This resulted in the Town Council finding itself in what the Head of Planning described as a “perfect storm”.

Current Situation

- Although no future sites in Harworth & Bircotes have been allocated for housing development by Bassetlaw District Council in their forthcoming Local Plan, there is always the danger of developers trying to push for planning approval. I have noticed in recent year’s government changes to Planning Regulations that make it harder for Local Authorities to refuse planning applications; there has also been a noticeable rise in appeals which, if upheld by the Planning Inspectorate, cost the District Council a considerable amount of money.

I feel a robust, in-date Neighbourhood Plan would offer some protection against the threat of any new proposed developments of new sites in our community.

Looking to the Future

- The Neighbourhood Plan is not just about protecting the community from new housing; it reflects the aspirations of local residents in Harworth and Bircotes for green spaces, leisure facilities, the green wheel, the Town Centre, and many other issues – many of these will require the support of the District Council and, on occasions, planning permission. **What the residents want, as identified in an up-to-date Neighbourhood Plan will influence planning decisions.**
- Much has changed since the first Neighbourhood Plan was adopted, such as the desire to develop the North Notts Border School, the creation of a Town Centre Master Plan – nor do we know what a new, growing population may want – this is something we need to discover.
- There is an issue, in that reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan is labour-intensive; I also find it disappointing that Neighbourhood Plans are now only valid for 2 years.

However, a unique opportunity has presented that I believe the Town Council should take. Karen Tarburton explained the following;

A funded pilot program has presented itself through Bassetlaw District Council from the department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities; this is to allow the District Council to have a simplified approach to Neighbourhood Planning.

It will support local communities to explore initiative ways to get even more people involved in community led planning. The District Council will support pilot projects in at least three communities which will help a better understanding of their local community and local area before considering if, and how, a Neighbourhood Plan could help to manage it. All that work would go before our work review; which will then hopefully be in line with the Local Development Framework Plan from the District Council.

It will enable the development of a bespoke place profile, and will provide a firm foundation for the Neighbourhood Plan to follow. Karen has spoken to the District Council and they would like Harworth & Bircotes to be part of the process.

After discussion, Cllr James proposed to that the Town Council takes part in the pilot scheme as above; this was seconded by Cllr Jones and resolved by the Council – 5 votes.

17216 To receive items for information

Karen Tarburton gave a brief update on the market stall holders.

The Chair then thanked Karen, Lee and the North Notts Bid team for their hard work putting on the Food & Drink event that was well attended. It was noted that the local shop holders had been invited to have a stall at the event; only two accepted. However, due to circumstances on the day; both were not able to attend.

17217 Time and date of the next Town Council meeting

The next meeting will be the Annual Meeting of the Town Council on the 23rd May 2022, at the Town Hall, Scrooby Road, Bircotes, DN11 8JP – the time is to be arranged subject to room availability.

District Cllr Evan's - District Councillor Report

Council Tax Rebate

You all know that although the government is calling it a Council Tax Rebate, it is actually a one-off grant of £150 towards the rising cost of energy, and applies to eligible households in Council Tax Bands A to D.

Officially, the scheme starts from April 1st BUT the government is using the Council Tax database as the means of distributing the grant – which means a huge workload for Council staff.

The District Council holds bank details for approx. 55,531 accounts.

1. 38,506 of these accounts are paid by Direct Debit- Bassetlaw District Council has to check that the accounts are still relevant and that the liable person still lives there (you would be surprised how many people move house)
2. The Council then has the massive job of getting bank details/confirming eligibility of around 17,000 Non-Direct Debit payers; the Institute of Revenues, Ratings and Valuation has advised Council to pay these when the April instalment has cleared.

This means you can expect payment late April/early May. To find out more about the grant, visit <https://www.bassetlaw.gov.uk/ct-energyrebate>

The Youth Hub, held weekly in the Town Hall, started on 22nd March. It is aimed at 16 – 24-year-olds who may need help in finding employment, it currently operates on an appointment-only basis, and is currently delivered by D.W.P. staff. The scheme will be reviewed after the first month.

The Youth Hub has taken a lot of background work from B.D.C. and D.W.P. including contact with local businesses. An official launch is being planned for the near future.

Update on The Bridge – Skills Hub: Government-funded Courses in Adult Care

North Notts College is offering a range of higher-level courses and apprenticeships from The Bridge - Skills Hub in Worksop from April 2022.

On offer are degree apprenticeships and higher-level skills training to local employers looking to develop their staff, such as:

- Level 4 & 5 Lead Practitioner in Adult Care, and
- Level 5 Leader in Adult Care

Employers in the care industry can upskill staff with Care Quality Commission (CQC) approved courses:

- Develop top-tier skills in health and wellbeing
- Advance their skills in management, safeguarding, communication, leadership and professional development
- Achieve a Level 4 Diploma as a 'Lead Practitioner in Adult Care' or a Level 5 Diploma as a 'Leader in Adult Care'

These higher-level apprenticeships are 95% government-funded (costing employers only £350).

Visit www.nnc.ac.uk/bridge-skills-hub or email enquires@rnnttraining.co.uk

District Council Targets Energy Improvements for Tenants.

Landlords in the private sector who rent out cold, draughty and energy inefficient properties will be forced to address their energy ratings, thanks to a new Council initiative.

Bassetlaw District Council is one of 59 local authorities that was awarded Government funding from the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy to clamp down on landlords who rent out properties with an Energy Performance Rating of F or G - since April 2020 privately rented homes must meet a minimum energy performance rating of EPC Band E, making it illegal to rent out homes below that (unless landlords have a limited exemption). Landlords caught failing to fulfil their obligations can be fined of up to £5,000 per property, and per breach.

District Council Supports Armed Forces Personnel by re-signing the Armed Forces Covenant – this is a promise to ensure those who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly.

The re-signing of this Covenant maintains the Council's leadership role in supporting the Armed Forces community, including Reservists, Veterans and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, across the district. The Council first signed the Community Covenant – the predecessor to the Armed Forces Covenant – in 2013 and was also one of the first employers in the country to attain an Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award from the Ministry of Defence.

As part of the Covenant, the Council assists all members of the Armed Forces Community, past and present, in many ways, including the support of Cllr. Tony Eaton, dedicated Armed Forces Champion.

You can find out more about the Armed Forces Covenant by visiting armedforcescovenant.gov.uk. You can also learn more about the support that Bassetlaw District Council provides to the Armed Forces at www.bassetlaw.gov.uk/community-and-living/support-for-armed-forces-personnel/armed-forces-covenant/