

NORTH WALSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held in the Council Chamber on 28 October 2014

PRESENT

Town Mayor: Mr R Sims (Chair)

Town Councillors:

Mrs J R Belson	Mr E Seward
Mr G Bull	Mr D Spencer
Mr F Choudhury	Mr A Thirtle
Mr T Morland	Mr D Turner
Mr C Peck	Mrs V Uprichard
Mrs R A Rose	Mr B Wexler

District Councillors:

Mrs V Gay	Mr E Seward
Mrs A Moore	Mrs V Uprichard

County Councillors:

Mr E Seward	Mr J Timewell
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The meeting opened at 19:00

PART I: Held in the presence of the press and members of the public

The Town Mayor opened the meeting, announcing the death of Cllr David Robertson on Sunday, 19 October 2014. A message from Mrs Pam Robertson was read to those present. Following this, the Town Mayor called for Councillors to observe a one-minute silence in memory of Cllr Robertson, which all guests observed as well.

11104 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Deputy Mayor and District Councillor Lloyd.

11105 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

As proposed by the Town Mayor and seconded by Cllr Rose, it was **RESOLVED**

That the minutes be signed as a true record of the meeting on 30 September 2014.

11106 ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

As proposed by Cllr Thirtle and seconded by Cllr Rose, it was **RESOLVED**

That the meeting be adjourned to allow time for public participation.

11107 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mrs Marion Lane spoke on behalf of North Walsham in Bloom, and Mr Roger Hopkinson of Cedar Court spoke on behalf of fellow residents and presented a petition to the Town Council, both expressing concerns about the proposed sale of the Council Offices by NNDC to JD Wetherspoon.

NORTH WALSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Mrs Julie Potter addressed the Town Council to provide an update on Woodville play equipment.

Mr Bob White of Showcase Gallery in Market Place spoke regarding the success of North Walsham in Bloom and town centre improvement proposals.

Further detail of these contributions can be found at Annex A. The Town Mayor thanked all speakers for their contributions.

11108 RECONVENING OF MEETING

As proposed by Cllr Uprichard and seconded by Cllr Hester

It was **RESOLVED**

That the meeting be reconvened.

11109 REPORTS FROM DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILLORS

A written report from Cllr Seward is at Annex B. In addition, Cllr Seward reported on the following:

- The proposal to resurface Mundesley Road Car Park and then introduce charging had been recalled for review by NNDC Cabinet, and this would be heard at the Cabinet meeting on 3 November. Cllr Seward stressed that the preferred position of North Walsham representatives at NNDC was that no change was made.
- NNDC Cabinet would also hear a proposal that NNDC purchased the 4 Market Street site and landscaped it.

As proposed by Cllr Bull and seconded by Cllr Belson, it was **RESOLVED**

To ask the Town Clerk to write to the Chief Executive expressing the Councils strong view that charging should not be introduced at Mundesley Road Car Park and that the funding identified for resurfacing could be better spent to benefit North Walsham, and expressing strong support for an NNDC purchase and landscaping of 4 Market Street.

County Cllr Timewell had not prepared a separate report, but offered to contribute (with Town Council's permission) to the discussions on the Heinz factory, the JD Wetherspoon proposal, and proposals to improve the town centre.

District Cllr A Moore reported that she had discussed the proposed closure of the Heinz factory with the NNDC Chief Executive. Apart from the loss of jobs at the factory, the supply chain included a number of local farms so the impact would be greater. There had been some success in finding alternative employment for staff of the factory.

BS

NORTH WALSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

District Cllr Gay had attend the Norfolk Citizens' Advice Bureau AGM. The Chief Executive of Norfolk CAB had not considered the impact of the JD Wetherspoon proposal, but had confirmed his commitment to North Walsham.

11110 REPORT OF THE TOWN MAYOR

A summary of the Town Mayor's engagements during the period August to October 2014 can be found at Annex C.

11111 PROPOSED CLOSURE OF HEINZ FACTORY AT WESTWICK

A motion seeking a Town Council discussion of the issue had been submitted by Cllr Spencer, who noted that the proposed closure would have a major impact on the town and the surrounding area.

Cllr Timewell reported that the Heinz factory was a modern plant, with a very enthusiastic management and loyal workforce. The factory processed around 100,000 tonnes of potatoes per year, with some 40% of that grown in Norfolk. Closure of this plant would be a "double whammy" for Norfolk farmers, with the problems at British Sugar meaning a lower demand for sugar beet. Norman Lamb MP was in contact with the Business Secretary, to engage his support for finding a solution that would keel the factory open. Norfolk County Council's Economic Development Team was working with Heinz. It was noted that Heinz had acted properly in preparing its staff for the worst case scenario, and that management continued their efforts to find and negotiate new contracts to replace the Auntie Bessie contract, which had been lost on the re-tender process.

As proposed by Cllr Spencer and seconded by Cllr Hester, it was **RESOLVED**

To ask the Town Clerk to Heinz expressing the concerns of the Town Council and asking that management did whatever they could to safeguard the jobs and local farms that would be immediately affected if the proposed closure went ahead.

Cllr Seward proposed an amendment, supported by Cllr Seward and **AGREED** by the Town Council that

The Town Clerk should additionally write to the County and District Councils and to Norman Lamb MP expressing the Town Council's concerns at the proposal, and asking to be kept informed with regard to efforts to find a solution.

11112 JD WETHERSPOON PROPOSAL TO PURCHASE THE COUNCIL OFFICES

As proposed by Cllr Rose and seconded by Cllr Thirtle, it was **RESOLVED**

NORTH WALSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

That a separate meeting in Part 2 be arranged to allow consideration of confidential contractual, financial and legal information prepared by NNDC and the National Association of Local Councils.

The Town Mayor asked Councillors to contribute their initial views including those from constituents. This indicated that opinion in the town was split. At one extreme, the general view was that the proposal was very attractive and that it would contribute to a rapid regeneration of the town centre. At the other extreme, feedback was completely negative with many concerns about the adverse impact on jobs and businesses. There had been a lot of activity on Facebook since news of the proposal broke in the press, mostly positive.

It was noted that a recommendation to accept the offer would be presented to NNDC Cabinet on 3 November. Cabinet first had to agree this recommendation. The proposal was then subject to receiving planning and listed building consent. If that all went through, NNDC would receive a sum of money for the building. It was agreed by all present that it was important that this money was spent in North Walsham in order to help mitigate the impacts of JD Wetherspoon opening.

Cllr Timewell reported on feedback from surrounding parishes, which welcomed the proposal as somewhere more local to go for a meal and drink at a reasonable price and at a known brand. It was, he suggested, an opportunity to bring a major player into the town. He had, in response to this, asked County Council Property Services to start looking at the County Council estate to consider opportunities to co-locate services as part of the government's "one public estate" policy.

In discussion on a new/updated strategy for the town, it was noted that NNDC Chief Executive had raised this with District Councillors. Some scoping work had been done by NNDC, but this had found that retail units in North Walsham were too small and customer throughput was insufficient to attract major high street names. However, a new JD Wetherspoon and enlarged Lidl could change that assessment.

11113 TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

The Town Clerk reported that the Chamber of Business had rejected the principal proposal to redesign the parking area in Market Place, and that there was no clear support for any other option.

As proposed by Cllr Seward and seconded by Cllr Uprichard, it was **RESOLVED**

To bring the proposal to a formal end and ask the Town Clerk to write accordingly to the County Council Highway Engineer. This would include a request that funding set aside for the proposed improvements be earmarked for other projects in North Walsham, such as the bus lay-by proposal.

NORTH WALSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Cllr Seward advised the Council that the proposed bus lay-by remained the subject of a feasibility study, and that the County Highway Engineer was seeking to transfer the finding set aside for the Market Place proposal into this project.

11114 FUTURE USE OF SPA COMMON

The Town Clerk reported that no further information on progress had been received from local residents with regard to form a trust to manage the site as a nature reserve. The Council had agreed at the meeting in September 2014 that two further options (grazing land and a dog-friendly park) would be considered if nothing was forthcoming.

There had been a written request for grazing land, and it was suggested that it should return to this if it brought the Council some income. The Town Clerk noted that this was about £30 per annum.

Ensuring the land was suitable for uses other than allotments would be handled through a risk-assessment process, which NNDC Environmental Health offices would be able to advise on.

Cllr Hester proposed a return to grazing land, seconded by Cllr Wexler. There were 9 votes in favour of this proposal.

Cllr Thirtle proposed that the land be set aside for conversion into a dog-friendly park, seconded by Cllr Bull. There were 3 votes in favour of this proposal.

By majority vote, it was therefore **RESOLVED**

To carry out the appropriate risk assessments, with a view to returning the land to grazing, and advising the applicants accordingly should the risk assessment show Spa Common remained suitable.

11115 Adoption of phone box at White Horse Common

A previous proposal to adopt a phone box had failed due to the cost of disconnection. However, the Town Clerk had received a package from NNDC listing phone boxes to be decommissioned, and this included White Horse Common. The package included an option for Councils to consider adopting phone boxes, at a cost of £1. The electrical supply could remain in order to power a light, or the Councils adopting a box could have it removed at their own cost.

At the proposal of Cllr Seward, seconded by Cllr Spencer, it was **RESOLVED**

That the Council was minded to purchase the phone box at White Horse Common for the stated price of £1 subject to due diligence research by the Town Clerk into any further costs or issues, and a report back to the Council in November.

RS

NORTH WALSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

11116 PLAY EQUIPMENT FOR WOODVILLE

It was noted that the next deadline for NNDCs Big Society Fund was 17 November 2014, with one further bidding round to follow that. NNDC would be expecting 'more than match-funding', drawn from a variety of sources including Council reserves.

As proposed by Cllr Bull and seconded by Cllr Seward, it was **RESOLVED**

That the Council ask the Town Clerk to consider the Council reserves and identify what it might contribute to the Woodville fund, and report to the November meeting.

11117 CHRISTMAS MARKETS WEEKEND, 18-21 DECEMBER 2014

The Town Clerk reported that, with the agreement of the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor and working with Regenerate North Walsham and the Griffon Area Partnership, a series of markets would be held in Market Place over the weekend before Christmas. This would commence with the regular Thursday market on 18 December, with the international Food & Craft Fayre (continental market) attending on Friday 19 and Saturday 20 December, and a farmers' and craft market on Sunday 21 December. There were further proposals about regular farmers' markets in the future, which would be brought forward in due course.

Previous difficulties with the continental market were noted, and the Town Clerk would ensure that organisers understood the rules.

At the proposal of Cllr Seward, seconded by Cllr Uprichard, it was **RESOLVED**

That the Council consented to the markets being held at the Market Cross.

11118 SAINSBURY'S RECYCLING FACILITIES

The Town Clerk reported that it was necessary for the Council to be pro-active in "managing" recycle in order to gain recycling credits for the bottle banks. The Council therefore needed to apply to Norfolk County Council for the credits, demonstrating that it had control, and a letter from Park Recycling (the contractor operating the Sainsburys estate recycling facility) stating that the Council was the nominated body would be requested. There was nothing to prevent the Council from having further bottle banks, provided it identified a suitable contractor.

As proposed by Cllr Seward and seconded by Cllr Spencer, it was **RESOLVED**

That the Council agreed to being the nominated body to receive recycling credits from the Sainsburys bottle banks, and to ask the Town Clerk to explore options for additional bottle banks in the town.

RS

NORTH WALSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

It was agreed that there was a need to advertise that the banks were in place for local benefit.

11119 FINANCE STATEMENTS

The summary of payments and receipts for the month was presented to the Council. A question arose regarding the reference to payment to Roy's in respect of the Town Mayor's charity for 2013/14 – this should read "by Roy's", and would be corrected.

As proposed by Cllr Rose and seconded by Cllr Choudhury, it was **RESOLVED**

To approve the statement of payments and receipts for October 2014.

Due to technical issues, the Town Clerk had been unable to fully consider the mid-year outturn figures. However, the forecast included an assumption for a pay increase from 1 January 2015 based on latest information from NALC.

11120 ESTIMATES 2015/16

Precepts were due for return to NNDC in January 2015. Given that the national pay negotiations had yet to be concluded, the estimates would need to include pay assumptions based on a range of possible scenarios. The estimates would now also need to include assumptions for accommodation and removal costs.

As proposed by Cllr Seward and seconded by Cllr Rose, it was **RESOLVED**

To ask the Town Clerk to bring proposed his proposals to the November meeting.

11121 PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 30 September and 14 October 2014 were received.

11122 OTHER COMMITTEES

The minute of

- (a) The Christmas Lights Group meeting, and
- (b) The Fun Day Committee meeting

held on 23 September 2014 were received.

11123 ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Estimates

Inscription on Town Clock

CCTV

Bottle banks

RS

NORTH WALSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Road safety – entry to North Walsham High School
Town strategy
Revival of Town Council Award

The meeting closed at 20:45

15