

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF HIGHAM FERRERS TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON
TUESDAY 26th JANUARY 2016 AT THE TOWN HALL AT 7.30PM.**

PRESENT:

	The Mayor (Councillor R J Gell)	
Councillor D Drage		Councillor D Hamblin
Councillor H L Jackson		Councillor D C Lawson MBE
Councillor Mrs S Mantle		Councillor Mrs O Mayes
Councillor Mrs V M Newbery		Councillor C O'Rourke
Councillor B Prigmore		Councillor A M T Reading
Councillor Mrs C Reavey		Councillor Mrs A M Sauntson
Councillor J Smithers		
Mrs S J Mitcham (Town Clerk)		Mr D Wicks (Mayors' Sergeant)

- 16/01. **APOLOGIES**
Councillor P Tomas and Councillors Mrs P Whiting.
- 16/02. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
Other Interests.
Cllr D C Lawson MBE Item 11.1. Chq no 300184 – Contributed to the planters through Members Empowerment Monies.
Cllr Mrs A Sauntson MBE Item 11.1. Chq no 300184 – Contributed to the planters through Members Empowerment Monies.
Cllr R J Gell Item 11.1. Chq no 300176 Mayoral Expenses.
- 16/03. **MINUTES**
RESOLVED:
That the record the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd December 2016 be signed by the Mayor as being a true and correct record.
- 16/04. **POLICING**
No Police present.
- 16/05. **PUBLIC FORUM (15 minutes)**
No Public present.
- 16/06. **MAYORS ANNOUNCEMENTS.**
The Mayor gave the following report:-
It had been quiet since Christmas. He had attended the Abba Tribute Night organised by the Swivel Club in favour of his Charity on 28th December and the 'Civic Evening Performance' Rats Panto Sleeping Beauty at Rushden on 6th January. There was still time to put in nominations for the Mayors' Awards.

There is to be a joint Civic Dinner and Dance with Rushden on 18th March at the Pemberton Centre and a Civic Service at St Mary's Church on 10th April at 6pm.
- 16/07. **PLANNING.**
16/07.1 **To consider responses to the following planning applications received: -**
(i) **15/02249/FUL Rushden Lakes: Erection of a leisure building to include a cinema, restaurant and retail units and other leisure uses and erection of a cycle hire facility together with proposals for access, parking and servicing space, hard and**

soft landscaping and other associated works : Land Adjacent Skew Bridge Ski Slope Northampton Road Rushden.

RESOLVED:

That the Council responds that they welcome the development and have no objections.

- (ii) **16/00080/FUL: Raise roof and pitch forming loft floor with front and rear dormers:46 Ullswater Close. Higham Ferrers.**

RESOLVED:

That no objections or comments be raised.

- (iii) **16/00042: Reinstate track for use as heritage railway line (on previous route of track), creation of platform and pedestrian crossing and erection at Old Railway Station Station Approach Rushden.**

RESOLVED:

That no objections or comments be raised.

- 16/07.2. **To note determinations on planning applications.**

RESOLVED:

That the report on determinations of planning applications previously considered be noted.

- 16/08. **TOWN CLERKS REPORT**

15/289. Higham Ferrers Colts

Letter of thanks received for the grant.

School Crossing Patrol Vacancy

This is now being advertised.

Neighbourhood Plan

Referendum Date is 18th February. Polling cards are now being distributed. Information is available at the Town Hall and the Library. There will also be an opportunity to speak to members of the Steering Group on 30th January during the Farmers' Market.

It was agreed that the Council should ask for signs to be put on the usual polling stations (if not being used) directing people to where they should vote.

RESOLVED:

That the Town Clerks report be received and noted.

- 16/09. **QUESTIONS.**

Cllr Mrs A Sauntson asked about the graffiti near Saffron Road Play area and whether it was going to be removed. She also asked about the missing dog bin lid. The Clerk advised the graffiti was to be removed and the dog bin lid was on order.

- 16/10. **REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER BODIES.**

Cllr Mrs V Newbery reported on her attendance at the Twinning meeting. The group were due to visit Hachenburg between 18th and 22nd August. There were 24 people booked and another 4 possibly joining the trip. Cost was £130 for adults and £75 for children. Looking ahead to 2017 when Higham Ferrers would host the Germans, there was always a need for host families. The annual dinner would take place 26th February.

Cllr B Prigmore spoke about the meeting of the Highways and Transport meeting. The meeting had started with a review of the actions to date. There had been a lot of work carried out. The group had agreed to break down the possible projects for the main route through Higham and they would begin with looking at plans for the Co-op Bus layby, possibility of downgrading the status of the road and reviewing yellow lines and whether all were needed. They group had also looked at the plans for Chowns Mill.

16/11. **FINANCE.**

16/11.1. **To approve accounts for payment as at 26th January 2016.**

RESOLVED:

That the accounts for payment total of £28565.56 be approved for payment.

16/11.2. **To approve the Bank Account reconciliation as at 31st December 2015.**

RESOLVED:

That the bank reconciliation as at 31st December 2015 be signed by the Mayor after being checked by Cllr D C Lawson MBE.

16/11.3. **To receive and note the budget report as at 31st December 2015.**

RESOLVED:

That the budget report as at 31st December 2015 be received and noted.

(i) **Moss killing at Tennis Courts.**

RESOLVED:

That the quote of £490 plus VAT be accepted to carry out moss killing work at the tennis courts and MUGA.

16/11.4. **To ratify expenditure under Clerk's delegated powers.**

RESOLVED:

That the following expenditure under the Clerk's delegated powers be ratified:-
All figures include VAT.

Colemans	1 x 2nd class book stamps	54.00
Colemans	2 x A3 colour copy	2.98
Amazon Marketplace	Grass seed and delivery	35.49
Amazon Marketplace	Can WD40	15.73
Amazon Marketplace	Address book	27.71
Buildbase	1 Pair of rigger boots	26.65
Wickes	Paint for pavilion	14.99
AVICA UK LTD	2 x Graffiti wipes	14.69
AVICA UK LTD	2 x case of toilet rolls	16.97
Rosetta Publishing Ltd	Delivery of Neighbourhood Plan leaflet	67.20
Associated Security Solutions	Service of safe	186.00
East Northamptonshire Council	Printing community plan booklets	104.55

16/12. **EXTERNAL AUDIT**

RESOLVED:

That the Council will remain opted-in to the Sector-Led Body arrangements for the procurement of external audit.

16/13. **ACCOUNTS SOFTWARE PACKAGE**

A report had been circulated outlining the features of Omega Financial Software to replace the current accounts package.

RESOLVED:

That the Council purchase Omega Financial Software. Details as follows:-

- Purchase of Software as detailed in the quote dated 19th January 2016 - £1830
- 1st year Annual Support and Maintenance Single User Licence - £579
- One days Training £399 plus 45p mileage.
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The current software licence with Scribe would need to be extended for 3 months to allow completion of year end. The company had advised that a fee would be charged to enable viewing of historical data of £221.25.

RESOLVED:

That the licence with Scribe be extended for 3 months at a cost of £73.75. Clerk to negotiate with the company over access to the data.

16/14. **COMMITTEES**

16/14.1. **Planning Committee held on 12th January 2016.**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 12th January 2016 be received and adopted.

16/14.2. **Recreation and Amenities Committee held on 12th January 2016.**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee held on 12th January 2016 be received and adopted.

Recommendations:

(i) **Saxon Close/Roman Way Open Space**

RESOLVED:

That the quote of £1750 plus VAT be accepted from Turney's to carry out the following works:-

To supply operatives and equipment to carry out the following work:-

- To supply and site four large stones in the area at the above mentioned site.
- To topsoil and grass seed the area.
- To supply and plant Lavender plants around the metal fence line.

(ii) **Play Area Surfacing**

The company had confirmed that they gave a warranty of 6 years for the wetpour.

RESOLVED:

That decision on the Wetpour quote B of £14,600 be deferred until the next meeting whilst further information on the warranties be sought.

(iii) **Fencing at MUGA**

RESOLVED:

That the quote of £1235 plus VAT be accepted to raise the height of the fencing at the MUGA behind the basketball net by 1.5m. Clerk to look at a new back board for the net.

16/14.3. **Environment Committee held on 19th January 2016.**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Environment Committee held on 19th January 2016 be received and adopted.

16/14.4. **Events Committee held on 19th January 2016.**

The Town Clerk raised her concerns that there was minimal staff available on the proposed date of 11th June. Since the meeting it had been discovered that one of the Parks and Open Spaces Wardens may not be available in addition to the Town Clerk and Administration Officer. The working party had met but felt that the date should stay the same. The lack of staff posed a risk in the event that the staff that should be there on the day were ill or absent for another reason. In addition, on the day there needed to be adequate resources to deal with any incidents or emergencies that should arise, with a person in charge. Although there had been no issues at previous events, plans needed to be in place in case there were. An alternative could be that Higham Ferrers Tourism led and managed the event providing the council with copies of the relevant risk assessments and insurances.

The concerns of the Clerk were noted and the Events Committee would needed to consider these concerns at their next meeting on 22nd February and consider how they would manage the event.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Events Committee held on 19th January 2016 be received and adopted.

Cllr Mrs A Sauntson reported that it had been agreed at the working party that the theme of the event would be 'Roaring 20's'.

Recommendation:

RESOLVED:

That the Town Council delegate authority to the Town Clerk to incur expenditure on the event within a net budget of £2000. It was noted that Tourism had some grant funds to assist with expenditure for the event.

16/15. **DRAFT NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PARKING STANDARDS**

RESOLVED:

That the following response be agreed to the draft Northamptonshire Parking Standards:-

The issue of car parking both in residential areas and to access the town centre was the biggest issue raised through the Neighbourhood Plan consultation on the subject of highways and transport.

The Council is delighted to see that it has been recognised that using parking as a demand management tool does not work. i.e. the lack of available parking does not encourage drivers to use other modes of transport and move away from car ownership. It does not help that at the same time subsidies to bus services are in the decline because of public sector spending restraint. This method of determining parking provision is causing problems in Higham Ferrers, particularly in the new estates where cars are parking on pavements and emergency vehicle access is compromised. In consultation for the Neighbourhood Plan only 5% said that there was not a problem with parking on pavements. It is an issue on which complaints are regularly received by the Town Council.

In consultation 91% of those who responded agreed or strongly agreed that:-

New housing developments will have adequate onsite parking, in accordance with Northamptonshire County Council parking standards. Highway standards will be encouraged where the impact of on-street parking is compromised.

Some of the policies drafted in the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan (Referendum 18th February 2016) require developers to comply with current Northamptonshire Parking Standards. The changes proposed in this Draft Northamptonshire Parking Standard, proposing improved standards compared with the current ones, are welcomed and supported by the Council. The current standards have not helped with the parking problems that are currently being experienced.

In particular:

- Recognition that cars have become larger but the size of parking spaces has not changed for many years. The proposed larger size parking spaces in the draft Parking Standards is therefore welcomed.
- Similarly, the fact that cars have become larger but the size of garages provided in new developments has not changed since cars were first manufactured means that most garages are no longer 'fit for purpose', are not used to accommodate cars and have just become store rooms or been converted into living accommodation. The changes proposed to make garages larger to recognise this increase in size is long overdue and is therefore also welcomed.

As noted in these Draft Parking Standards and in the Neighbourhood Plan that we have prepared, it is clear that residents do not like parking their vehicles in rear courtyards and need to be able to see their cars to the front of their property. There is no room in the front of many properties for on-plot parking and the carriageways are narrow so vehicles are often parked half on the footpath and half on the carriageway. As noted in the Draft Parking Standards this has resulted in footpaths and carriageways becoming car parks. In turn this has made movement through these developments using the footpath or by cycling a tricky and potentially unsafe activity.

It is recognised that the Draft Parking Standard will not be able to correct existing layouts and also some of the problems are to do with the layout rather than Parking Standards. It is also appreciated that parking vehicles on footpaths is an illegal activity but if there is insufficient parking in the front of properties people will continue to park their cars over the footpath because there is no alternative. The Draft Standard covering highway parking is therefore supported.

The Draft Standard for Residential Parking (Class C) is also welcomed except for the smaller sized properties and houses in multiple occupancy within (Class C3).

Parking problems are most acute in the areas where the smaller house types and starter homes exist. One and two bedroom homes require at least two parking spaces because the only way that these homes are affordable is if all the occupiers are working to contribute to the mortgage repayments. In two bedroomed properties it is quite possible to have both bedrooms occupied by car owners giving up to 4 vehicles per property. Even a one bedroomed property often requires two people to go to work to service the mortgage but the Draft Standard only allows 1 parking space. This means at least two and sometimes three or more vehicles will need to be parked per dwelling overnight and at weekends.

The other problem is that many residential occupiers have work vans that have to be parked overnight. These take up more room than a car and at the moment this problem seems to be ignored by developers but ignoring this issue will continue to cause problems for other residents and visitors. Could a number of larger unallocated spaces be provided in new developments to accommodate vans in the same way as disabled spaces?

The Council fully supports the Draft Standard for cycle parking and the enhanced parking space sizes for disabled people.

16/16. **RIVERSIDE PARK LEASE**

This was a renewal of a lease that had expired in September 2015. Negotiations on the proposed lease had already taken place and had been agreed by the Council. The only proposed change was the responsibility for the 3 bridges which would now be the responsibility of the Town Council. Concerns were raised at the long term financial liability on the Council of this change. Discussions took place about whether negotiations could be reopened.

RESOLVED:

That the Riverside Park Lease for a term of 25 years with an annual rent of £10 payable up front with Northamptonshire Council be sealed.

16/17. **CLOSURE OF MEETING TO PUBLIC AND PRESS.**

RESOLVED:

That in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and by reason of the confidential nature of the following items of

business, the Press and the Public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting.

16/18. **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Personnel Committee held on 18th January 2016 be received and adopted.

Recommendations:

(I) **Pension Contributions**

RESOLVED:

That the 'Custom Earnings' option for NEST be used with a contribution rate of 10%, 7% by the Council and 3% by the staff member. The predicted cost to the Council in 2016/17 was £700.

(ii) **Establishment Review.**

RESOLVED:

That the Council accepts the quote of £2475 plus expenses from LGRC to undertake the staff and committee review.

16/19. **RE-OPEN MEETING TO PUBLIC AND PRESS.**

RESOLVED:

That the confidential business having been concluded, the Press and Public be re-admitted to the meeting.

16/20 **ITEMS TO REPORT.**

None.

Chairman

Date