

BRIDGWATER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 28 MAY 2015 AT 7.00 PM AT THE CHARTER HALL TOWN HALL BRIDGWATER

PRESENT: Cllr Leigh Redman (Mayor of Bridgwater – in the Chair), 12 other members of the Town Council, and some 30 members of the public.

01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Cllrs Ms Brown, Lerry and Turner

02. WELCOME:

The Mayor welcomed members of the public to the 12th Annual Public Meeting of the Town Council since its inception in 2003. He also welcomed newly elected members of the Council attending the Annual Public Meeting for the first time.

03. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN PUBLIC MEETING 2014:

The Minutes of the 11th Annual Town Public Meeting held on 08/05/14 had been circulated, received by members of the Council, and were available at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Annual Town Public Meeting held on 08/05/14 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

04. MATTERS ARISING:

No specific matters were raised.

05. NORTHGATE - FUTURE USE OF LAND - MINUTES OF SPECIAL TOWN PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON 24/03/15:

The Minutes of the Meeting had been circulated and were available at the meeting and were received.

The Town Clerk confirmed the conclusions of the meeting, the action which had been taken to refer copies of the minutes and report on to the respective land owners and both Highway and Planning Authorities. The item on the agenda followed on from the meeting, the Town Council commitment and the desire for continuing public engagement.

Cllr Smedley, who had given a presentation at the Special Public Meeting, then gave a further update in much more detail which effectively followed on from a meeting with Mr Doug Bamsey, the Corporate Director at Sedgemoor District Council, outlining the steps which SDC and SCC were intending to take. It had not yet been determined whether the site would be offered as one or offered or developed as two separate parcels. Cllr Smedley outlined the anticipated programme taking this forward which would involve both the SDC Capital Planning Group and the presentation of project options to the SDC in addition to further discussions with SCC. The whole site remained within the core strategy as a town centre development site. It was apparent that there was not now the same urgency for the capital receipt as there had been with the sale for the planned major supermarket. Various alternative uses had been mooted, though it was clear that any future development must be sustainable in the whole and that the likely crucial date before which public engagement was essential was a Sedgemoor meeting on 29/07/15.

To take this forward and maintain the impetus, the Town Council would be considering the establishment of a Town Development Forum with wide ranging representation from

organisations within Bridgwater and it was considered that the Northgate site would make an ideal example as concentrated topic to bring this forward. The Town Council would examine this at their meeting in June having regard to their interest in the Town generally, their role in commenting upon planning applications, the support shown by Mr Bamsey for this and the reinforced commitment to achieve maximum consultation.

The Mayor then took comments and representations from the floor, some of which had been pre-notified as offered in the meeting Notice. Initially related to Northgate and the workhouse, but general in respect of the Town, Mr Gibson referred to the New York Landmark Policy established many years ago which encouraged the retention of landmark buildings and if to be replaced required buildings of significant merit to be developed.

Mr Chapel, on behalf of the Civic Society, referred to positive views expressed at the recent meeting led by Bridgwater Forward and sought confirmation in writing that the former workhouse would not be demolished. It was confirmed that there had been a written undertaking by email to the effect that the demolition would be deferred but this had to be acknowledged as a deferment and not confirmation that at some stage in the future the workhouse might not be demolished to achieve an alternative development.

Mr Cudlipp hoped that there would be consultation via the County Council before any action was taken in respect of the workhouse referring also to the comments of Mr Stubbs at the previous meeting.

Mr Tucker emphasised that acceptable use (uses) should be established for the site since the immediate pressure to secure a capital receipt had been overcome by the Tesco withdrawal and the terms on which this was based.

Mrs Jones emphasised again the desire to see leisure provided and the maximum green space retained.

Mrs Burrows welcomed the plans for a Town Development Forum, considered there would be a lot of interest in this, and that it should be set up sooner rather than later.

The undertaking was given that all the views expressed would be taken forward to the Town Council at their meeting on 11/06/15.

06. BRIDGWATER TOWN COUNCIL - RESUME OF YEAR 2014/15:

Updated copies of this annual production were issued and introduced by the Mayor. The Town Clerk commented on the further increasing role of the Town Council and the wide ranging involvement in the community and all projects etc that affected community life.

Drawing on the content, Cllr Smedley outlined plans going forward for the Town Council to broaden public engagement and specific areas where the Town Council sought to support the community examples being grant aid and, specifically, Ward grants, youth support and the worth of building on the good work that the Town Council had achieved since its inception.

From the floor, members of the public asked about level of income and precept, the long term desires of the population, the need for public transport that met all needs and that major objective of continuing to grow the economy of Bridgwater and financial resources that would see a major upturn in the Town Centre.

07. ISSUES FROM THE PUBLIC:

Advance notice had been given by three members of the public.

Mr Chris Hooper raised issues in relation to the cleanliness of the Town, liaison with police and police patrols in the town centre and on estates, and cyclists using pavements and the

lack of regard for pedestrians. The Town Clerk confirmed that all these items were regularly on the Town Council agenda and he outlined the position in each case. It was commented that the major problem in terms of cleanliness was, actually, the need to educate.

Mr Chapel commented on community assets and the need to be vigilant citing several buildings which he considered should be the subject of registration. In particular, he referred to the way in which the Hope Inn had been dealt with by the District Council and the planning application which had now come forward. The issues with the legislation remained in that to secure benefit the community needed to be mobilised with an end purpose.

Other points which were raised and were dealt with, or would be taken forward included:

- A lack of attention to the eastern side of town over the river;
- Steps to be taken to improve the historic Watergate;
- CAMRA's success in North Petherton and why similar had not surfaced in Bridgwater;
- Procedure to be followed to secure Local Government Boundary Commission reviews of the town boundary in those areas where new estates were built on the periphery;
- The availability of financial benefit via the EDF/HPC proposed development and, in particular, the Community Impact Mitigation (CIM) fund for which all applications were monitored.
- Continuing need for care and attention of Yew trees at Bristol Road Cemetery;
- Concern that despite general improvements, some graves headstones and kerbing were sustaining damage;
- Pressure on the Environment Agency to clean the river through the middle of the Town and especially deal with mud gathered on the slipways;
- The continuing deterioration of the Concrete Castle, notwithstanding the "SAVE" plans for refurbishment;
- The need for greater notice of police surgeries for beats across the Town and in the areas outside the town centre;
- The feeling that Sedgemoor unwarrantedly received the blame for most things;
- The message that the Town Council were fully representative of the Town and continued to support the community.

Members undertook that where any of the items raised required further attention, this would be pursued.

08. PUBLIC MEETING:

The Mayor thanked all those who had participated for their attendance and contributions, and their interest in the Town and Town Council's work, and emphasised the continuing commitment of all those elected to the Town Council.

09. LATE NOTICE:

Mr David Preece submitted a late representation in relation to the Civic Enhancement Fund and an outstanding Ward Grant in the Dunwear area, and the Mayor agreed that this would be brought forward to the next ordinary meeting of the Town Council.

The meeting finished at 8.30 pm

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Signed
Chairman