

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL

COUNCIL

22 November 2022

Minutes

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Cleeve) in the Chair

Councillors:

Alcock	How
Coles	Lee
Curtis	Rolfe
Dowling	Taylor
I Fradgley	Vos
J Fradgley	Warren-Howles
Harding	

Clerks: Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Press: Absent
Public: There were members of the public present

35 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Dyer, Fojtik, Jackson and Mackenzie and were accepted for the reasons given.

36 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

37 To receive written requests for dispensation for disclosable pecuniary interests

None were received.

38 To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate

None were received.

39 **Public Participation**

Mr Andy Abercrombie, on behalf of fellow licence holders of garden plots, addressed the meeting in regard to Minute 40, Cemetery Extension Task and Finish Group.

Mr Abercrombie expressed his disapproval at the Town Council's proposal to purchase the two plots of land at Bordon Place for the extension to the existing cemetery. Mr Abercrombie had been a 'garden plot' licence holder for 15 years and he requested that the Town Council re-consider the project for a number of reasons which he outlined to the meeting.

Note The Mayor indicated that in order to expediate the business of the meeting the above item would be considered earlier in agenda order.

These Minutes reflect the order in which they were considered

40 **Cemetery Extension Task and Finish Group**

In accordance with Minute 132 of the Council meeting held on 29 March 2022, the process of acquiring the two plots of land at Bordon Place adjacent to the existing cemetery, which was currently used as garden plots and owned by Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC), was considering.

The Task and Finish Group had recently convened and considered the project's advancement:

- SDC had now given notice to all licence holders.
- In response to the Environment Agency's (EA) request, the Council's assigned consultant was working to determine the best places for three test pits and insert dip-wells within each plot.

Council was advised that until the EA had considered the above results it would be difficult to estimate the costs involved in turning the land into a cemetery. In addition to

the findings of the survey, the design of the cemetery could also have a substantial impact on costs associated with the project.

With the current budget setting process underway, there was now some concern expressed over the associated costs of obtaining planning permission and developing the site. When this project was discussed at Council previously some key financial information had not been available. Although it had been made clear that there would be additional associated costs.

Legal advice was also being sought regarding the terms used in relation to garden plots / growing space / allotments.

Members attention was also brought to the additional legal advice that, *once a burial authority whose cemetery became full had no legal obligation to extend or develop a new one.* Council was reminded of the Council decision of 25 January 2022, *that the Council in resolving to proceed with the land purchase would safeguard the provision of burial land to serve the town.*

Councillor Curtis, who had chaired the most recent Task and Finish Group gave an update to the meeting and referred to the Minutes circulated.

He confirmed that it was anticipated that there were currently sufficient plots on the existing cemetery to last a further nine years. There had been a suggestion, if the project progressed, that the larger of the two proposed sites could be the first to be developed, leaving the smaller until later in the process.

Councillor Curtis then addressed the meeting as the Town and District Ward Member and indicated that in order to reconcile the potential conflicting interests with licence holders the Town Council would be looking to work with SDC on providing reassurance to existing licence holders, if at all possible.

He indicated that at the recent meeting of the Group it had

been requested that the Council's position required reaffirming before the continuation of the project in light of the financial, legal and planning issues which had since come to light.

There were various questions asked by members on the technical tests to be undertaken.

The various options available to the Council were discussed and highlighted to members included the deadline of the Preliminary Agreement with the DC of August 2023.

Whilst it was considered that it would be imperative for the results of the EA tests to be considered before confirming the purchase of land it was also considered that there was now the opportunity to reassess the whole project before it progressed.

In light of the above and in order for a fully informed decision to be taken, it was deemed appropriate that a thorough report detailing all choices and associated costs be submitted to the Task and Finish Group for further consideration.

It was then Proposed and Seconded and unanimously

- RESOLVED:**
- 1) That consideration of the matter be deferred until the Cemetery Extension Task and Finish Group had considered a full report, detailing costs and expenditure.
 - 2) That the District Council be approached and asked for assistance in order to help determine the best course of action.

NOTE: Members were asked if they wished for any additional questions to be considered then these be forwarded to Councillor Curtis.

41 **Update from Springfield Housing on the Fred Winter Centre**

Janette Beckett, Director of Support Services and New Business and Robert Evans, Head of Service, Spring Housing Association gave a presentation to Members on an overview and update on general progress at the Fred Winter Centre (FWC), which had been requested by the Community Services Committee.

Both informed Members of the current activity at the community hub-supporting which supported local people in addressing homelessness and hardship. Currently the 15 Units of accommodation were currently all occupied. It was also explained that a temporary accommodation service had recently been launched.

Currently operating from the site were the following organisations:

- Spring Housing Association
- Citizens Use Support Provider
- Springfield Mind
- Orbit
- Stratford Foodbank

Unfortunately, the cafe facility had ceased trading, and this was very disappointing. Spring Housing had currently taken on the cafe with the ambition that this could turn into a training kitchen.

There were also a further 18 partners which provided services on a weekly/monthly basis eg. Crisis.

Recently a temporary accommodation service had been offered, whereby support was offered to assist in finding more permanent accommodation. Mr Evans identified how the funding from the Town Council had been utilised at the

Centre and thanked the Town Council for their support.

Members raised several questions which included Emergency accommodation; length of tenancy; anti-social behaviour and lack of 24hr security. These were answered, and comments taken onboard. Further information on these subjects would be circulated after the meeting. There were also queries over the initial understanding of what the project had been intended to address. Ms Beckett confirmed that the FWC was never intended to be an emergency accommodation service and confirmed their role was assessing people's needs and helping them to move on in a planned way.

Spring Housing undertook to get back to members on the following issues which had been raised.

The Mayor thanked both officers for their attendance and on behalf of the Council for all their work carried out at the Fred Winter Centre.

42 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor, in noting that she was already six months into her Mayoralty, gave a brief update about the Warwickshire CAVA Awards which she recently attended. At this event, the Ludford Macebearer, Mick Love MBE was presented with a long service certificate for his commitment to the community.

Finally, the Mayor publicly thanked George Pragnell Ltd for carrying out urgent repair work, without charge, to the Mayor's pendant on the chain of office.

43 To Adopt Open Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 26 July 2022

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: The Draft Open Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 26 July 2022 be as a correct record.

44 **To Adopt Open Minutes of the Planning Meetings held on 2 and 30 August 2022**

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: The Open Minutes of the Planning Committee Meetings held on 2 and 30 August 2022 were approved and adopted.

45 **To Adopt the Open Minutes of the Personnel Committee Meetings held on 9 August, 6 September and Draft Minutes of 4 October 2022**

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: The draft Open and Confidential Minutes of the Personnel Committee Meetings held on 9 August, 6 September and Draft Minutes of 4 October 2022 were approved and adopted.

46 **To Adopt the Draft Open Minutes of the Community Services Committee Meeting held on 25 October 2022.**

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: The draft Open Minutes of the Community Services Committee Meeting held on 25 October 2022 were approved and adopted.

47 **To Adopt Open Minutes of the Civic Heritage and Events Committee Meetings held on 6 September and Draft Minutes of 1 November 2022.**

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: The Open Minutes of the Civic Heritage

and Events Committee Meetings held on 6 September 2022 and Draft Minutes of 1 November 2022 were approved and adopted.

48 **To Adopt Notes of the Cemetery Extension Task and Finish Group Meetings held on 27 July and 4 October 2022.**

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: The Notes of the Cemetery Extension Task and Finish Group Meetings held on 27 July and 4 October 2022 were received.

49 **To consider the further recommendation of the Personnel Committee on The Council's Chaplain**

At the July 2022 Council meeting, the Minutes of the Personnel Committee held on 28 June 2022 had been considered. The Committee had recommended:

That from 2023, the incumbent should be addressed as the Council's Advocate but the job description for the Council's Chaplain would still be fit for purpose with slight amendment.

Council had considered at that time that the matter required further consideration and should be referred back to Personnel Committee for further deliberation. Personnel Committee had given further deliberation to the subject at its meeting on 6 October 2022 and were now firmly of the view that the appointment should be more inclusive.

The Committee considered that by including the following in the job description, this would allow for the opportunity to embrace and develop relationships which could lead to further candidates for the role.

- 1) Aiming for the betterment of the spiritual, moral, pastoral, and cultural well-being of the Mayor and the Town

- Council;
- 2) Presenting a 'Thought for the Day' at the beginning of council meetings;
 - 3) Commitment to engaging with other faith groups at a civic level;
 - 4) Civic commitment;
 - 5) Acknowledging that the role is not a platform from which to proselytise or to try to convert people; and
 - 6) Possibly being invited, by the vicar of Holy Trinity Church, to take part in the annual Civic Service.

Accordingly, following discussion,

It was Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: That the post remain as the Council's Chaplain but the job description be amended to reflect the opportunity to broaden the engagement process for a suitable candidate.

50 **Appointment of Town Council representative to Outside Bodies – Trustee to the Municipal Charities**

Following consideration, it was

Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Cleeve be appointed as a Trustee to the Municipal Charities for the remainder of the term.

51 **Housing Needs Survey**

A report on the housing needs was recently conducted across the Town by Warwickshire Rural Community Council which had looked to update the 2017 housing needs survey for Stratford-upon-Avon Town.

Following consideration, and general observation that single storey housing was a requirement which had been which was constantly ignored by developers.

It was Proposed and Seconded

RESOLVED: To note the Housing Needs Survey.

52 Arrangements Under the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015

All authorities required an appointed external auditor even if the authority met the criteria to qualify for exemption, as a Certificate of Exemption is required to be submitted to the external auditor and the auditor must be in place in case of objections from local electors. Now that the submission deadline for the 2021/22 Annual Governance and Accountability Returns had passed, there was now the option to opt-out of the next round of 5-year audit appointments.

Opting-out is a significant decision which required careful consideration and an authority that wished to opt out must formally reach and record that decision in a way that meets the requirements of its own governance framework.

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: That Stratford-on-Avon Town Council remains within the Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments central external auditor appointment arrangements.

53 Prospective New Town Councillor Event

With all out elections scheduled for May 2023, it was suggested as a strategy to draw potential candidates that an open afternoon be held before the next Council meeting.

Accordingly, it was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: That arrangements be put in place for an event to attract potential new Town Councillors ahead of the all-out elections.

54 **Appointment of a Responsible Financial Officer**

Following the indication earlier in the year from Mr Phil Mills, Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) of his intention to retire from the Town Council, there has been an active recruitment process. Mrs Georgina Kerrigan had been appointed and had recently commenced her employment. There would be a handover period between the two officers and this would enable the new RFO to benefit from his expertise and experience. The new RFO appointment would be confirmed at a future meeting of the Council.

55 **Replacement Open Spaces Vehicle**

At Finance and Audit Committee on 15 November 2022 consideration was given to the requirements for a replacement vehicle for the Open Spaces Team following a request by Community Services Committee. The vehicle in question was 18 years old and there have been a few complaints from members of the public about the road worthiness of the vehicle.

The Finance and Audit Committee members instructed the Town Clerk to do a final trawl of lease options and present to them ahead of the Council meeting so that an informed decision could then be taken.

The options are to purchase a brand-new vehicle, a second hand vehicle or to lease a new vehicle. The Community Services Committee has requested that quotes for an electric van be investigated but currently there are none available which would match the requirements of the service. Financial figures for the above options were supplied to Committee members. There was much debate around the advantages and disadvantages of all the options.

Following consideration of all of the available options it was

Proposed and Seconded

RESOLVED: That a vehicle be leased from Clapham
Commercials (Option 2) for a 5 year

period.

56 Written Reports by Representatives to Outside Bodies

- Age UK- Cllr Warren-Howles
- Stratford in Bloom - Councillors Fradgley and Warren-Howles
- Friends of the Shakespeare Church – Councillor Taylor
- VASA – Councillor Mackenzie;
- Stratford Support Group – Councillor Rolfe (verbal update)
- Stratford Historic Buildings Trust – Councillor I Fradgley (verbal update)
- Town Centre Strategic Partnership - Councillor Vos (verbal update)

57 Verbal Ward Reports

Bishopton and Clopton Ward - Councillor Alcock reported that the Community Builder employed jointly by the Town Council and District Council had commenced employment and was already working hard on projects within the wards.

Guildhall Ward – Councillor Fradgley was pleased to report work was underway on Barclays Bank.

58 Town Clerk's General Verbal Report

There were no open updates. However, the Town Clerk indicated that there was a verbal update which required consideration in confidential session.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED To exclude the public (including the press) from a meeting of the Council, it is necessary for the following proposition to be moved and adopted “that, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the meeting for item number(s), which involve the likely disclosure of exempt

information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as indicated

Date of Next Meeting The next Meeting of the Town Council will take place at 6:30pm on Tuesday 31 January 2023.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.55pm

Confidential (separate sheet)

59 Offer of Land

The Town Clerk had been approached by the District Council to inquire whether we were interested in the ownership of a plot of land in Tiddington known as 'The Pitt'.

Council members were firmly of the opinion that this offer was not pursued after considering it, for various reasons, including cost of upkeep and other potential issues.