

Mere Town Council

TOWN CLERK - MRS. L. C. WOOD

Minutes of a meeting of the Town Council held on Monday, 4th June 2018 at 7.30 p.m. in The Andy Young Pavilion, Springfield Road, Mere, BA12 6EW

Present: Councillors J. Jordan (Chairman), A. Colman, P. Coward, R. Coward, C. Hazzard, Mrs. J. Hurd, G. Jeans, A. Mead, E. Mitchell, B. Norris, R. Sims & Mrs. L. Traves

Also: 2 members of the public

Public Session

The Chairman will convene the Town Council meeting after the public session (please note that members of the public are no longer permitted to speak unless invited to do so by the Chairman).

Cllr. Roy Sims speaking on behalf of Mere Cancer Research wanted to thank everyone who helped with and attended the Mere May Fayre. He said that even though it was a scaled down event this year, they still managed to raise £1366.

Cllr. Aubrey Colman said that he volunteered for Action Hearing Loss UK who had 31 volunteers and they cover repair and retubing of hearing aids and provide free batteries – they repair 2,500 hearing aids per year. They run a monthly surgery in Mere and a monthly surgery in Gillingham (the Mere one being held at the Doctors Surgery). He was pleased to report that the organisation just picked up UK National Award for best customer Service.

Cllr. Hazzard confirmed that he had recently replanted the tubs and planters around the town with summer bedding plants and he wanted to say thank you to the two grounds staff who were a tremendous help and a good asset to the Council.

The Chairman said that some members of the Town Council had been councillors for a long time and others were relatively new members. The more long-standing councillors will know, because it was Minuted some years ago, but I thought it was worth mentioning for the newer members that Town Councillors should not take it upon themselves to instruct Council staff to carry out any work but that they should identify the work to the Clerk for the appropriate allocation.

Apologies for absence received from Cllrs. Mrs. K. Symonds (Vice-Chairman), R. Hill & G. Ings.

159. To receive declarations of interest from members and to consider requests for new DPI dispensations.

Members are invited to declare disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests in items on the agenda as required by the Mere Town Council Code of Conduct for Members and by the Localism Act 2011.

- Cllr. Mrs. Traves declared a personal interest in planning application ref: 18/02738/FUL
- Cllr. C. Hazzard declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No. 166 a) Payments
- Cllr. G. Jeans declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No. 166 a) Payments

160. Minutes – RESOLVED to approve Minutes of Town Council meeting held on Monday, 14th May 2018 on proposal made by Cllr. R. Coward, seconded by Cllr. Jeans and carried with a unanimous vote of those present on 14.5.18

161. Matters Arising

***a) General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) – To approve and adopt the following documents:**

- i. General Privacy Notice V1 – May 2018
- ii. Consent Form
- iii. Guidance Notes & Action Plan

After making one or two minor modifications, members RESOLVED to approve the above documents on proposal made by Cllr. Mead, seconded by Cllr. Jeans and carried with a majority vote (1 abstention).

162. Reports & Consultations

a) Neighbourhood Policing Report - None

b) County Councillor's report – Cllr. Jeans said that he had attended a meeting at Trowbridge where he was disappointed to learn that the recycling changes have now been deferred until March 2019.

163. Planning

a) Applications: (All applications can be viewed on Wiltshire Council's website

<http://planning.wiltshire.gov.uk/Northgate/PlanningExplorer/ApplicationSearch.aspx> – and type in the relevant application number)

Application Ref: 18/02738/FUL

Application for: Full Planning

Proposal: Removal of existing conservatory and erection of single storey extensions and associated alterations

At: Birchwood Cottage, Ivymead, Mere. BA12 6EN

The Chairman explained that this application entailed the removal of a conservatory and replacement with an extension and he also said that there were several other alterations, including the conversion of a garage into accommodation, the addition of a downstairs WC and solar panels on the east roof elevation.

The Chairman said that there were no new windows facing neighbours and no objections had been received. Cllr. Norris said that the property was not overlooking anyone and was on a large plot and he therefore proposed that the planning application should be recommended for approval. **RESOLVED** to recommend approval on proposal made by Cllr. Norris, seconded by Cllr. P. Coward and carried with a vote of 10 for and 2 abstentions. (Cllr. Mrs. Traves having declared a personal interest in this application, refrained from discussion & voting & in order not to compromise his position as Wiltshire Councillor, Cllr. Jeans abstained from discussion or voting.)

b) Ref: Planning Application 16/12217/OUT – Report on Public Inquiry for Appeal by Richborough Estates for Outline Planning to develop land at Castle Street, Mere – The Chairman explained that both he, Cllr. Jeans, Cllr. Mrs. Symonds, Cllr. Norris & The Clerk had attended the Public Inquiry in Salisbury at various times and stages. The Chairman said that he had been impressed with the Inspector who had allowed him to speak on the first day. Cllr. Jeans, two other local residents and the CPRE also spoke on the first day. The Chairman had reiterated our previous comments and then explained that we had always worked with Wiltshire Council on the Core Strategy and that our developments had always been plan led. He also mentioned aspects relating to the footpath. Cllr. Norris said that when he attended they were contesting the availability of housing. Cllr. Jeans reported that the Planning Inspector was extremely tolerant and allowed him to speak in the afternoon. He said that it had all become very technical as it seemed that, following previous appeals which had been upheld, there were now two methods of dealing with land supply (the Liverpool Method and the Sedgefield Method). Cllr. Jeans had also attended one of the last sessions of the inquiry where they had discussed the visual impact following a site meeting at which they had viewed the site from Castle Hill & long Hill. The Clerk said that she had attended a session in the afternoon on 17th May where they had tried to agree a draft set of conditions between the two parties should the Inspector make a decision to uphold the appeal. (The Inspector had made an effort to explain that this was Without Prejudice and a necessary process). The Chairman also explained that the CPRE had also put forward a good argument and had subsequently made a complaint about how things were handled. The Chairman said that it would be a matter of weeks before we heard the outcome of the Inspectors decision.

c) Neighbourhood Plan update – Cllr. Norris confirmed that at the last meeting, the committee had agreed Terms of Reference and agreed that the Mere Neighbourhood Plan should serve until 2031 rather than 2026. Publicity leaflets had been printed and distributed at the Mere Cancer May Fayre and more would be distributed at the Church Fete next week. Cllr. Mrs. Hurd said that she had received some positive feedback from people who had received the publicity leaflets. Cllr. Norris also confirmed that a

questionnaire had been drafted and this would be presented to the committee for consideration at the next meeting to be held later this month.

164. Highways, Rivers, Footpaths, Traffic & Transport

a) Highway & footpath issues for Parish Steward, Wiltshire online reporting & street lighting faults –

Cllr. Mead reported that Cllr. Colman had informed him that the dog warden's presence in Mere had been visible as she had been recently seen sitting in a marked van within the car park of the Recreation Ground.

b) Application for an Order to add a footpath to the definitive map and statement at The Square, Mere –

a copy of a letter from Wiltshire Council's Rights of Way Officer had been distributed to members with their agenda papers – the letter stated that Wiltshire Council had received an application to add a public footpath to the definitive map and statement leading from The Square in a northerly direction to North Street (plan attached). Wiltshire Council is now placed under a duty to investigate the available evidence to determine, on the balance of probabilities, whether or not a right of way for the public on foot, subsists or can be reasonably alleged to subsist and to amend the definitive map and statement of public rights of way accordingly. Wiltshire Council were inviting the Town Council's comments on this matter and would be grateful to receive any further evidence regarding public use of the route in question and/or historical evidence of the claimed route.

Cllr. Jeans explained that he had collected quite a dossier on this issue as he had had a large number of people contact him when the gate was locked recently and access was blocked. He pointed out that many people used this path as a safe way of getting from The Square to North Street/Manor Road/North Road as the alternative route, between the old Lloyds Bank and Waltons Antiques buildings, was a single width roadway with no footpath and it was hazardous to walk along here with young children or a pram/pushchair. Cllr. Jeans explained that in order to claim a public right of way you need to produce evidence that unobstructed access was available for a 20 year period minimum. Cllr. Jeans says that from 1997 to 2017 the gates were not locked and public access was available and as far as he is aware people have not been challenged when going through there and there were no signs saying that people were not allowed to go through there. Cllr. Sims said that when Mrs. Young had the post office next door, apparently this was a closed off area. Cllr. Jeans confirmed that Mr. Andy Young controlled the building and access on behalf of Mr. Clifford until approximately 1989. Sam Squires was the last person to chain the gates up in 1992. After that, people went through there unopposed until the gates were shut in December 2017.

Cllr. P. Coward said that he could not remember it ever being open for public use. Cllr. Mead said that he could not ever remember it being open for public use. Cllr. Norris said that he had used the path within the last 12 years and had not been challenged, although he had not thought of it as a public right of way. Cllr. Sims said that the alleyway was used as a public toilet and a place for people to take drugs. Cllr. R. Coward said that his grandson used it on a regular basis when he gets off the school bus to get to North Street. RESOLVED that, should it be legally feasible for this route to be added as a footpath to the definitive map and statement, then it would be welcomed as a safer route for pedestrians to come into town on proposal made by Cllr. Jeans, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Hurd and carried with a vote of 4 for, 3 against and 5 abstentions.

165. Buildings, Open Spaces, Play Areas, Sports Grounds, Allotments & Cemeteries

a) To set policy for the surrender of Deeds of Exclusive Rights of Burial – The Clerk reported that she had received a request to surrender 3 plots in the old cemetery that had been purchased in October 1987. The purchase price paid was £108 for all 3 plots. The Clerk had indicated that she could send out a Deed of Surrender for the grant holder to sign and return this with the original Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial certificates and that we would refund them the purchase price. However, the grant holder's daughter was not happy about this and said that the plots must be worth more than that now and she would have thought that the Council would refund a figure that was nearer their current purchase price. The Clerk said that she had subsequently carried out some research on this and only managed to find policies from burial authorities where the surrender value is the original purchase price as specified on the Deed of Grant. Both Salisbury City Council & Gillingham Town Council say that their policies are the same and both

pointed out that you do not purchase a burial plot as an investment. The Clerk said that she was asking the Council for a ruling on this so that policy wording could be drafted and included in the rules & regulations. Members unanimously RESOLVED that the Town Council should adopt new policy wording to be added to our Cemetery Rules & Regulations to reflect the following: 'The owner of an Exclusive Right of Burial can surrender the Exclusive Right of Burial if the grave has not been used for burial, on completion of a Surrender Form and return of the original Deed of Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial (if possible). The surrender value being the original purchase price as specified on the Deed of Grant'.

166. Finance, Policy & Resources

***a) Payments** – RESOLVED to approve payments set out in payment schedules attached on proposal made by Cllr. Mead, seconded by Cllr. P. Coward and carried with a majority vote of those present in the room. (Cllr. Hazzard & Cllr. Jeans, having declared a pecuniary interest, left the room whilst this item was considered and took no part in discussion or voting).

***b) To approve End of Year budget expenditure report for 2017/18** – RESOLVED that the Budget/Expenditure report for the financial year ending 31.3.18 should be approved on proposal made by Cllr. Norris, seconded by Cllr. R. Coward and carried with a unanimous vote.

***c) Audit of Accounts**

Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2017/18 – Part 3

- i) Annual Internal Audit Report - the Clerk informed members that on 29th May, Mrs. Mary White had carried out an independent examination of the Town Council's accounting records, its compliance with relevant procedures and its risk assessments and internal control procedures. Mrs. White had agreed that, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the council and had completed section 4 of the Annual Return, answered 'yes' or 'Not Covered' to all questions & had signed the Annual Internal Audit Report in the Annual Return accordingly. Mrs. White had written a letter: *'On 29th May, I carried out an internal audit of the Town Council's Financial Statements for the year ending 31st March 2018. It is my opinion that proper accounting records have been maintained by the Council and that financial statements have been properly prepared. With reference to the comments made by the External Auditor last year, I can confirm that I have responded 'Not Covered' to the statement relating to Petty Cash payments as the Council operates a reimbursement system rather than a petty cash float system. However, I can confirm that all petty cash reimbursements have been supported by receipts and VAT appropriately accounted for. In this Audit the Town Clerk, Lindsey Wood, provided every assistance and had, as ever, everything necessary to hand and in excellent order.'* Members expressed their gratitude to Mary White for carrying out the Internal Audit and the Clerk for preparing all the paperwork.
- ii) Annual Governance Statement 2017/18 – Points 1 – 9 of the Annual Governance statement 2017/18 (Section 1 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return) were read out to members and members answered 'yes' to each of the statements. The Annual Governance Statement was signed by the Clerk and by the Chairman in the presence of the Town Council.
- iii) Accounting Statements 2017/18 - members approved the accounts and supporting statements which included the bank reconciliation, identification of variances requiring explanation, reconciliation between boxes 7 & 8 and analysis of earmarked reserves which had been previously distributed to them with their agenda papers. From the information provided therein, the Accounting Statements 1-11 (Section 2 of the Annual Return) were completed and approved by the Town Council. Confirmation of approval of the Account Statements was signed by the Clerk and by the Chairman in the presence of the Town Council.
- iv) Notice of Public Rights & Publication of Unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return - The Clerk confirmed that, as required by The Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 the Town Council must now publish the unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return and the

Notice for the Commencement of the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights. Publication is on the parish website: www.merewilts.org

167. General Items & Consultations

a) Authority to re-home gas brazier to another Wiltshire Council – The Clerk informed members that the Town Council had been given a gas brazier by the Pageantmaster in 2015 and had used this once. However, members had felt that it was ineffective as it could not be seen from a distance and also that it was very cumbersome and difficult to get up on the hill considering that it required X2 very large propane gas bottles. As this equipment was taking up storage capacity in the Council's workshop, the Clerk wondered whether the Town Council would agree to this being offered to a neighbouring parish for use. Members thought that this was a good idea and were happy for the Clerk to advertise this via the Area Board or WALC newsletters.

168. Forthcoming meetings/events

a) Homefield Bungalows - Invitation to Ribbon Cutting/ Opening Photocall to take place on Monday, 18th June at 3.00 p.m.

13. Future agenda items

Note: Members are reminded that the Town Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability), Crime and Disorder, Health and Safety and Human Rights.

*Further information on these items enclosed/attached

MERE PEACE MEMORIAL SPORTS AND RECREATION GROUND

Registered Charity No. 1093497

To approve End of Year Summary & payment to Mere Town Council for maintenance of Recreation Ground Charity during 2017/18 of £10814.54 – RESOLVED to approve the End of Year Summary income/expenditure report (within Budget/Expenditure report) and to approve the payment to Mere Town Council for maintenance charges for 2017/18 of £10,814.54 on proposal made by Cllr. Mitchell, seconded by Cllr. Norris and carried with a unanimous vote.

Meeting closed at 8.34 pm

