

Minutes of the **Town Council** meeting
held in the Council Chamber, The Council Offices, North Street, Ilminster,
on Tuesday 29 October 2019 starting at 19.30hrs

Present:

Chair: Cllr P Burton

Councillors: Cllr J Dewick, Cllr M Gunn, Cllr V Keitch, Cllr I Mackillop, Cllr A Shearman, Cllr S Shepherd, Cllr L Taylor, Cllr F White and Cllr L Wilcock.

In Attendance

Officers: Miss J Norris (Town Clerk)

9 members of the public attended the meeting

Speaker 1 raised the subject of climate change and the points made included:

- There is indisputable evidence that climate change is the biggest threat to humanity and the planet as we know it
- Living in Ilminster it is easy to forget the worldwide picture such as the affect on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and that the Maldives are at risk of vanishing entirely.
- There have been noticeable changes in the UK's weather patterns
- The current generation of teenagers are frightened about what the future may hold
- We all have a responsibility to care for the world around us

The speaker concluded by asking Ilminster Town Council to join other Councils and announce a climate emergency.

The Mayor explained that it would not be possible to make a resolution at the meeting as it was not an agenda item and continued that climate change was a matter the Town Council were taking seriously and he had made green issues the theme for his Mayoral year. The Mayor continued that he was in the process of contacting the County Council to investigate the possibility of obtaining some land, adjacent to Herne Hill for the purposes of planting trees and extending the existing woodland.

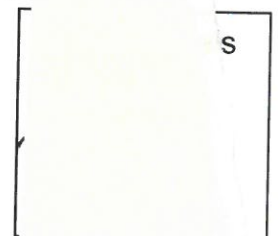
Additional contributions were then made which included:

- Natural burial grounds are increasing in popularity – this could link with a new woodland
- There are organisations who will supply trees in bulk at very little cost
- Links to the planning process including planning approvals and the need for more trees to be included as part of the design especially on new housing developments
- The embryonic Ilminster Neighbourhood Plan and how it may influence future design, sustainability and the Ilminster environment

Cllr Keitch stated that she was willing to propose a motion regarding climate change to the next Town Council meeting and will liaise with the Town Clerk to get it on the agenda.

692 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hamilton, James and Swan.



693 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made regarding any items on the Agenda.

694 Minutes

A) The minutes of the meeting held on **18 June 2019** were considered

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

B) The minutes of the meeting held on **17 September 2019** were considered

Cllr Keitch gave a Point of Information; the ground works for electric car charging point in West Street Car Park, Ilminster are likely to be started week commencing 4 November 2019.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

695 Former Gooch & Housego Premises – Community Group

A group interested in forming a Community Interest Company (or similar organisation) to develop and manage the former Gooch and Housego premises presented their ideas to the meeting; the presentation included:

- The Town Council is acknowledged as the lead bidder as they had the contact with Gooch and Housego
- The presentation is on behalf of a small group of community people who have joined with Quakers and Methodists
- The community group had an idea to form the base of a project and have spoken to a commercial advisor, an architect and insurers to start developing the basic idea
- The community group believe the best way forward would be to form a Community Interest Company (CIC) which would have various objectives but in particular to acquire and develop the former Gooch & Housego premises
- A staged approach to the project is currently the preferred option
A board of 6 or 7 people would hold the assets of the CIC
- If the Town Council were initially involved the Board would comprise 7 Directors, otherwise the Board would be 6 Directors
- It would need a lot of volunteers to run the CIC
- The formation of the CIC would be stage 1 of the project; stage 2 would be to create an outline business plan to enable a decision to be made as to whether or not to bid for the premises
- Stage 3 – decide whether or not to proceed with making a bid to acquire the premises
- Stage 4, if proceeding, would be purchase
- Stage 5 would change the CIC to a Charitable Organisation or similar
- The cost to develop the business plan is estimated at £45
- each of the three First Directors contributing funding of £15,000
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Chair's Initials

The Community Group Recommends that the CIC is the building purchaser and that the Town Council

- Becomes a First Director
- Provides seed funding of £15,000 for CIC to complete the outline business plan
- Provides a minimum investment loan of £150,000
- Continues supporting the CIC / CIO including funding where applicable

Questions raised and discussed included:

- There are developers interested in the project

Note: the meeting was adjourned 19:55hrs to enable members of the public to speak in accordance with the Town Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Note: The meeting re-convened at 20:06hrs

696 Poppy Project

The Town Council had been asked to consider if the Town Council was prepared to support the Ilminster Poppy Project by including it on the Town Council's insurance but the Town Clerk advised the meeting that the group had made alternative insurance arrangements.

697 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, section 1(2), for:

- (i) Agenda item 7 Former Gooch & Housego Premises due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted i.e. business information and information relating to potential negotiations;
- (ii) Agenda Item 8 Staff Salaries due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted i.e. personal information

Some of the reports relating to these items had been withheld from public circulation and deposit.

698 Former Gooch & Housego Premises

Information from the Working Group regarding the former Gooch & Housego premises was considered with a view to deciding the Town Council's position regarding acquisition of the property.

The Working Group had identified 3 Options – Town Council purchase and develop the site; Town Council work with a partner to acquire and develop the site; Town Council have no involvement with acquiring and developing the site

The Mayor presented the meeting with information collected by the Working Group:

- Building survey
- Costs to make safe and watertight
- An asbestos survey had been provided by the current owners
- There had been an inspection by professional, competent people used to dealing with old buildings
- Insurance costs would be approx. £10,000pa

Chair's Initials

- Feasibility costs to develop a project could be up to ½ million pounds
- The building has very little general historic interest but it is accepted that it has a part in Ilminster's history
- The Red Brick Building in Glastonbury was a reasonably sound structure to start with and has a simpler lay-out but even after 10 years has not yet achieved financial stability and sustainability
- The public drop-in session at Greenfylde school generated good ideas for use of the building
- Faith groups are looking to buy premises outright
- SPARK provided a useful session about management structures of Community Interest Companies and Charitable Organisations and setting them up
- Some research has been done regarding potential developers
- The Working Group's SWOT analysis.

Issues raised or discussed during consideration of this agenda item included:

- Expectations of adjacent landowners
- The number of adjacent landowners
- Planning permissions that have previously been granted for the site
- Funding streams – funding is not guaranteed and can take over 6 months to process
- It is hard work to identify funding sources and write applications
- The building is interesting and complex, being over several levels
- The cost of developing a business plan
- The potential implications of not making an offer
- Current rental costs for various accommodation uses to which the Town Council contributes
- The reason the Gooch & Housego building is listed is because of its local historic interest
- The risks associated with the 3 possible options (The Town Clerk had drafted a risk assessment based upon the Working Group's discussions which was circulated to the Councillors present)
- Capacity to take the project forward

RESOLVED

- (i) To suspend Standing Orders (with particular reference to Standing Order 7 "Previous Resolutions") so that a full range of options including not making an offer to buy the premises could be considered
- (ii) That a letter is sent to Gooch & Housego stating that having regard to the research the Town Council has undertaken and the costs that have been identified the Town Council will not be making an offer to acquire the premises
- (iii) That if the embryo CIC wish to approach the Town Council with a funding request or other similar proposal it must be with full facts, justifiable costings and reasoning

Chair's Initials

699 Staff Salaries

Consideration was given to the staff salary ranges in the light of recent recruitment experience.

Issues raised or discussed during consideration of this agenda item included:

- The number of applicants for the various posts advertised recently
- Trying to attract a good calibre of candidate
- Salary is an important consideration when people are deciding whether or not to submit an application for a job

RESOLVED that the Deputy Clerk salary range should be spinal column points 22-25 (currently £26,317 - £28, 785)

The meeting closed at 21:14hrs

Chair's Signature & Date

