

Minutes of the **Town Council** meeting
held in the Function Room, Bowling and Tennis Club, Shrudrick Lane, Ilminster,
on Tuesday 4 June 2019 starting at 20.30hrs

Present:

Chair: Cllr P Burton

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

In Attendance

Officers: Miss J Norris (Town Clerk)

No members of the public attended the meeting

636 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Higgins.

637 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were made in respect of any items on the agenda.

638 Minutes

- a) The draft minutes of the meeting held on **23 April 2019** were considered.
RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 April be confirmed as a correct record
- b) The draft minutes of the meeting held on **14 May 2019** were considered.
RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2019 be confirmed as a correct record
- c) The Office Action Plan relating to Town Council Meetings was considered.
Issues raised during discussion of this agenda item included:
- **RESOLVED** to note the Office Action Plan.

639 Clerk's Updates

The following Clerk's Updates had been sent by email since the last Town Council agenda was published

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

- Staffing
- A Civic Service will not be held in June 2019 but consideration will be given to holding one in the autumn

Number	Date	Topics
5/19	08.05.19	1. Grounds Manager 2. Street Names
6/19	29.05.19	1. Staffing 2. Civic Service 3. Civic Year Theme 4. Committees and Outside Bodies

640 Payments and Virements

The Schedule of Payments was presented for Council's information.

RESOLVED that the payments listed in the schedule presented to Council totalling £17,137.43 gross are approved

641 Prohibition of U turns and Right Turns Order 2019

Highways England Company Limited (a) proposes to make an Order under sections 1(1) and 2(1) and (2) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 on the A303 Trunk Road in Wiltshire. The effect of the Order would be to prohibit:

(a) U-turns on the A303 between 1278 metres east of Southfields Roundabout and 8456 metres east of Southfield Roundabout;

(b) right turns from the lay-bys adjacent to the A303 eastbound 1743 metres east of Southfields Roundabout and 192 metres east of Boxstone Hill Overbridge and westbound 601 metres east of David's Lane Overbridge and 823 metres west of Boxstone Hill Overbridge.

Anyone wishing to object to the proposed Order should send, not later than 13 June 2019 or within 21 days from the date of first publication of the notice, if that period expires later, a written statement of their objection and the grounds on which it is made to Highways England at the address above, quoting reference HESW 04/19.

Issues raised during discussion of this agenda item included:

- Taking into account the number of accidents it seems sensible to take any safety measure possible

RESOLVED that the Town Council supports the proposals

642 Exclusion of Press and Public

Consideration was given to taking Agenda item 8 Former Gooch & Housego Premises, Cornhill, Ilminster TA19 0AH, without members of the public and press present, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted i.e. financial information and items subject to negotiation

RESOLVED not to exclude the press and public during consideration of Agenda item 8 Former Gooch & Housego Premises, Cornhill, Ilminster TA19 0AH

643 Former Gooch & Housego Premises, Cornhill, Ilminster TA19 0AH

To consider and agree the Town Council's stance regarding the imminent auction of the former Gooch and Housego premises.

Before Councillors started their debate, the Town Clerk, as Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), reminded the meeting that the Auction Conditions contained an important notice that included " a prudent buyer will, before bidding for a lot at auction take professional advice from a conveyancer and, in appropriate cases, a chartered surveyor and an accountant, the buyer will also have carried out the usual searches and made usual enquiries."

The RFO also said that before large amounts of expenditure were incurred there should be due diligence done regarding both the purchase and any prospective partners; Councillors should consider their risk appetite and risk assess the possible courses of action and there should be cognisance of the impact of the potential expenditure on the budget, other planned expenditure and the precept level.

The RFO had obtained the current loan interest rates from the Public Works Loan Board but understood that the approval to borrow process was a matter of weeks rather than hours.

Issues raised during discussion of this agenda item included:

- The Town Council does not need to work alone it could work with a partner or partners who have expertise in complementary areas such as property development
- Before entering into any partnership where finance is involved due diligence must be undertaken before any formal or legal commitments are made
- The Town Council is responsible for the careful use of money paid by all council tax-payers
- It is good to see the community working together and putting forward suggestions for how a community building could be used
- The possibility of the premises being withdrawn from the auction to enable time to have feasibility study etc
- Some of the community activities suggested may also be suited to other sites
- Previous suggestions have been made for community use of the building
- The reasons why previous plans have not come to fruition
- The Town Council cannot spend money it hasn't got unless it is prepared to borrow and increase the precept in order to fund the borrowing
- There is a very short timescale before the auction date in which to make decisions
- The building has been on the market for a long time
- If you don't own a building you are limited as to the influence you can have over its use
- The Town Council's bank balances

RESOLVED

- (i) That an offer to purchase the premises is made immediately to Gooch & Housego

Subsequent to the resolution above there was a lengthy discussion as to the amount of the offer to be made and there were proposals as to the amount that did not get seconded or when put to the vote were not agreed.

In an attempt to break the deadlock an alternative course of action was proposed, seconded and put to the vote which was carried and so it was

RESOLVED that the Town Clerk contacts Gooch and Housego with the following offer / request "The Town Council working with community groups are asking you to withdraw the former Gooch & Housego premises at 1 Cornhill, Ilminster from the auction and give us a maximum of 6 months to formulate a business plan and reasonable offer. The Town Council guarantees that an offer will be made by the end of the 6 month period.

The meeting closed at 22:17hrs