

# Droitwich Spa Town Council

MINUTES of the meeting of Droitwich Spa Town Council held in the Council Chamber, St. Richard's House, Victoria Square, Droitwich Spa on Tuesday 23 October 2018 at 6.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs C Bowden (Mayor)  
Councillor R G Beale  
Councillor G R Brookes  
Councillor GA Duffy  
Councillor L Evans  
Councillor Mrs S Harris  
Councillor A Humphries  
Councillor A H Laird  
Councillor RJ Morris  
Councillor W T Moy  
Councillor R E Murphy  
Councillor T J Noyes  
Councillor A Roberts  
Councillor A M Sinton  
Councillor Mrs K Tomalin

APOLOGIES for absence: Councillors Ms J Bolton, Mrs A Hawkins and S Best.

## PUBLIC QUESTIONS SESSION

No questions were submitted for consideration.

-ooo000ooo-

## 140 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Mr A Humphries declared a non- prejudicial interest for Agenda Item 6 – Wychavon District Council- New Homes Bonus and Community Legacy Schemes under option 1, point 2 for the Norbury Theatre roof fund, in as much as he is a member of the Theatre Group.

Councillor AH Laird declared a non- prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 6-Wychavon District Council -New Homes Bonus and Community Legacy Schemes under option 1 , point 1 for the Droitwich Waterways (Pamela May) Trust in as much that he is a Trust Member.

Councillor WT Moy declared a non- prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 4 for the Brine Heritage Project and Agenda Item 6- Wychavon District Council- New Homes Bonus & Community Legacy Schemes, item 2.1 in as much that he is the Chairman of the SOBB'S (Save Our Brine Baths) Charity.

Councillor RJ Morris declared a non – prejudicial interest in Agenda item 4 for the Brine Heritage Project as the Wychavon District Council portfolio holder.

## 141 TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS BY PASSING THE FOLLOWING MOTION

That the press and public be now excluded from the meeting under the provision of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) act 1960 by virtue of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted which involves financial and legal matters

RESOLVED That the press and public be now excluded from the meeting under the provision of Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 by virtue of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted which involves financial and legal matters.

#### 142. THE BRINE HERITAGE PROJECT

The Town Clerk updated Council of the following points.

- That requests had been lodged from Councillor Brookes and Councillor Moy arising from the Full Council meeting which took place on 23 April 2018 and 11 June 2018 for the Town Clerk to arrange a meeting for them as representatives of Sobb's Charity with Wychavon District Council officers – Mr Jack Hegarty – MD and Mr Phil Merrick. This was in relation to the Sobb's Lido Park Planning application which had been granted outline planning permission earlier in the year. WDC had responded that they preferred a private meeting with Sobb's at this stage and not a public or formal Council Meeting. A tentative date was suggested at the end of August 2018.
- On the 27 July 2018 Phil Merrick from WDC visited the Town Clerk and advised of an approach from a potential private investor who was interested in tenancy options at St Richards House in connection with a business venture to include a Brine health treatment aspect. It was requested that The Town Clerk meet with the potential investor to facilitate a walk -through of the premises to help interpret potential and possible options.
- A visit was arranged for 29 August 2018 and the potential investor attended accompanied by his two associates and Mr Patrick Davis who deputised for Phil Merrick. During the over view of the premises the potential investor requested plans of the building in order to enable architects professional opinions as to options in scope. Having looked into this further the Town Clerk responded to Phil Merrick in his capacity as the introducer that regrettably there were no suitable plans available as the construction of the premises originates circa 1930's.
- Subsequently Phil Merrick responded that WDC Surveyors would undertake a survey of the building in order to comply with the potential investors request for drawings conducive to producing a business plan for consideration. No discussion took place regarding payment for a survey and WDC attended on 11 September to meet with the Town Clerk. Their inspection then verified that the survey would necessitate approximately 1 week's work to complete and they would be in touch.
- The Town Clerk advised Phil Merrick that given the options being looked at it was important to ensure full transparency. Key considerations mentioned included the prominent Sobb's Lido Park project, wide-scale public interest in the Brine Heritage of the Town including active fund raising for Sobb's as one of the designated Mayoral Charities this year, constraints with the potential private investors aspiration – namely the a key Town Council asset building, Civic Pride, critical tenancy and income arrangements, the existing public service provision of the Museum and Tourist Centre. The requirement for the introduction of the potential investor at a meeting of the Full Council for an informed consideration was emphasised and a further reminder made that Sobb's anticipated a meeting regarding

their Lido proposals. Simultaneously Councillor Sinton (as leader) and Councillor Mrs S Harris (as Chairman of the Community & Amenities Committee) were fully appraised by the Town Clerk on 10 September 2018.

- On 12 September three alternative dates were suggested by WDC to arrange a private meeting with Sobb's and Town Council representatives in early October. This meeting took place at St Richards House on 2 October 2018 when WDC introduced the potential private investor scenario. Those present comprised Mr Jack Hegarty and Mr Phil Merrick –representing WDC, Councillor Moy & Councillor Brookes representing Sobb's, Councillor Sinton (Leader) & Councillor Mrs Bowden (Mayor) representing DSTC and the Town Clerk. Agreement was made for the Town Clerk to attend and report back to the Town Council the next of a series of focused discussions at Wychavon Offices with the potential private investor and their associates which was scheduled the next day.
- The Town Clerk attended the aforementioned meeting at WDC on 3 October 2018. Delegates comprised the potential private investor and associate, Patrick Davis, Councillor Morris and Phil Merrick of WDC. The Town Clerk reiterated the necessity for any business proposal to be presented to the full Town Council in order for informed consideration to take place.
- The Town Clerk reported back to the Town Council Emergency Committee at a special meeting on 4 October 2018. Thereafter it is understood that Patrick Davis approached Sobb's in his own capacity to discuss options further. This then lead to a request from Councillor Moy & Councillor Brookes through Councillor Sinton (as Leader) during the course of a further special meeting of the Emergency Committee on 11 October to convene an Extra – Ordinary Meeting of the Full Droitwich Spa Town Council at the first available opportunity in order to consider all of the facts. A further consideration was that WDC be instructed to suspend any remaining survey work for the St Richards House premises with immediate effect. This was duly actioned by the Town Clerk through contacting Vic Allinson at WDC on the morning of 12 October 2018.

Councillor Sinton read out the following statement and proposal.

*“Madam Mayor and Councillors*

*It will have come as a shock to those of you who have not been involved on the Emergency Committee that there is a tentative proposal being discussed to create a Brine Baths experience using St. Richard's House. Your knee-jerk reaction was probably the same as mine.” How dare the people involved make plans to utilise one of prime assets without involving the Town Council. This must be rejected out of hand.”*

*I want to urge you this evening not to take that view but take a much more pragmatic, balanced and considered approach. The policy of this Council has always been and remains giving 100% support to the SOBBs group in their desire to build a Brine Baths including the Lido Park vision. As we all know this project has captured the imagination of the people of our Town and we as a Town Council are duty bound to accord with that. However that does not mean we close our eyes to the merits of other proposals which may well complement and indeed expedite the development of the SOBBs project. The Town Council should welcome opportunities for potential collaborative working projects for the good of the Town.*

*We have our own views on the way the situation which our Town Clerk has outlined all came about but this is not the time for recriminations-it has happened. I would suggest we need to look at what is on offer as an opportunity not to be dismissed because of preconceived ideas*

*and -I hate to have to say it- personal animosities. Imagine the uproar in the Town if we were seen to reject a potential major investment on this basis.*

*So let us look at the facts. We have an outline of two proposals which are not mutually incompatible. The SOBB'S vision is currently at the Outline Planning Permission stage for Lido Park with design options and fund raising both actively proceeding. Similarly the private Investor's provisional proposal is as yet at an embryonic stage for options at St Richards House although many factors will need full clarification and further professionally informed decisions will have to be made. There are also many other important considerations affecting both proposals including the Brine Heritage legacy , Civic Status ,brine extraction and infrastructure compatibility , Heritage Lottery and Arts Council funding eligibility & opportunities, as well as ensuring the ongoing sustainability of any commercial business venture. The Town Council should respectfully welcome interest towards any collaboration to benefit the community and bring the Brine Heritage vision nearer to fruition.*

*It is therefore proposed that,*

*1. To ensure full transparency a meeting is convened to which all interested parties should be invited. The Town Council requests that Nigel Huddleston is approached in his capacity as MP to facilitate the meeting. Any such discussions can be hosted by the Town Council at St Richards House.*

*2. Foremost any proposals that impact Town Council assets including St Richards House must be subject to a professional feasibility study and report. This should also consider Civic Pride, critical income and tenancy arrangements, maintaining the public service delivery of the Tourist Centre and Museum and the future scope & longevity of any proposed commercial initiative”.*

Various opinions were expressed by individual Councillors in general discussion. Councillor Moy stated that he would have liked to present a counter proposal but accepted the motion was now proposed and seconded. The Town Clerk recommended that it was important to maintain confidentiality about the potential private investors due to the very tentative stage of any proposals and commercial sensitivity. Councillor Noyes enquired whether the Town Council had incurred any costs with regard to the WDC Surveyors partial premises survey undertaken. The Town Clerk explained that no costs had been incurred or discussed with WDC with this regard. Councillor Brookes asked Councillor Morris to explain his involvement with the potential private investor's approach which appeared to pre-date the 23 April 2018 Full Council meeting. Councillor Morris responded that he had been involved with the enquiry for some time which originated from the local MP – Nigel Huddleston and Patrick Davis. Councillor Morris explained that he was bound by commercial sensitivity and confidentiality constraints for such matters in his role as WDC Elected Member and economic portfolio holder. Councillor Morris likened this sensitivity to similar projects he had been involved with in the District including the Riverside development at Evesham. Councillor Brookes thanked Councillor Morris for his explanation.

**RESOLVED** That,

1. To ensure full transparency a meeting is convened to which all interested parties should be invited. The Town Council requests that Nigel Huddleston is approached in his capacity as MP to facilitate the meeting. Any such discussions can be hosted by the Town Council at St Richards House.

2. Foremost any proposals that impact Town Council assets including St Richards House must be subject to a professional feasibility study and report. This should also consider Civic Pride, critical income and tenancy arrangements, maintaining the public service delivery of the Tourist Centre and Museum and the further scope and longevity of any proposed commercial initiative.

#### 142. MUNICIPAL PLANTING CONTRACT

The Town Clerk updated that pursuant to minute reference number 106 of the Community & Amenities Committee meeting held on 10 September 2018 details were now available from prospective contractor for full consideration. The Town Clerk also reiterated that despite endeavours since first notification in early August from the existing contractor of their withdrawal from the planting contract after the 2018 summer season, it had not proved possible to source alternative options from different contractors to enable a tendering exercise to be completed. As such costings were only available from one interested contractor as detailed. The contractor is part of the Countrywide National Franchise and is based nearby in Herefordshire. They have good credentials in landscaping and planting work in the locality including Hereford City and Tewkesbury and it is noted that the latter was also an acquisition from the Town Council's existing provider- Ubico.

The Town Clerk recommended that if Council was in agreement with the outlined costs a meeting should be convened with the prospective contractor at an early opportunity to confirm an initial one year arrangement. This would also coincide with the imminent requirement to switch out the remainder of the summer planting and replace with winter bedding. The prominence of the forthcoming 2018 Remembrance Sunday and the importance of maintaining Civic Pride with suitable and tidy floral displays in the Town Centre was also mentioned as an important consideration point.

Staff and Maintenance Costs (as outlined on attached summary sheet)	= £25,925.00
Summer Planting supply and preparation (includes baskets)	= £4725.56
Winter Planting supply and preparation	=£1290.78
<b>Total (net of VAT)</b>	<b><u>=£31941.34</u></b>

RESOLVED To delegate the arrangements to confirm the contract as detailed. Matters delegated to the Town Clerk & Assistant Town Clerk (C &A) to progress at an early opportunity and confirm with Countrywide.

#### 143. WYCHAVON DISTRICT COUNCIL –NEW HOMES BONUS & COMMUNITY LEGACY GRANT SCHEMES.

The Town Clerk made reference to and explained the following report. It was also clarified that for the New Homes Bonus scheme separate applications will need to be submitted for any supported projects to accord with the usual NHB process requirements including consultation.

## **Wychavon District Council – New Homes Bonus and Community Legacy Grant Schemes.**

### **1. New Homes Bonus**

*Mr David Manning- Community Programmes Manager, (Strategy and Communications) from Wychavon District Council has confirmed on 11 October 2018 that Droitwich Spa Town Council has approximately £88,000.00 remaining in residual money from previous years allocations that has not been used on projects . Of this value £15,000.00 is allocated in principle to the St Peters Field Sports Pavilion project with a condition of completion attached to release. David has recommended that some consideration for allocation is given for the balance of £73,000.00.*

*Some provisional suggestions received are as follows,*

- 1. The Droitwich Waterways (Pamela May) Trust – Electric Boat and Charging point £10,000.00 contribution. (Councillor AH Laird).*
- 2. The Norbury Theatre roof repair fund. Unspecified contribution (Councillor A Humphries). Anne Lane from the Norbury Theatre has contacted the Town Clerk on 15 October 2018 and offered to provide further details about the project including an arranged site visit.*
- 3. A Tri – Agency approach contribution in collaboration with Wychavon District Council and Fortis Housing towards the West Project. This component relates to introducing and managing additional sports and play equipment for different age groups on pockets of WDC owned green space land in the West Project area. The suggestion has been put forward by David Manning (WDC) who is leading on coordination of the West Project initiatives.*

### **2. Community Legacy Grant Scheme**

*Pursuant to Minute Reference number 117 of Full Council on 24 September 2018, the Wychavon District Council- Community Legacy Grant Scheme (2018-2021) has a two stage competitive bidding process spanning the three year term. Parish and Town Councils have the opportunity to register up to two applications each year of the scheme. Initial expressions of interest are invited before 23 November 2018 and proposals which align with the overall aims of the fund and meet criteria will be invited to submit a full detailed application by 18 January 2019. Full briefing details of the scheme have been circulated in July and September and are also attached. The main caveat is that the Community Legacy Scheme is intended to support suitable innovative and ambitious capital projects that create a lasting community legacy. Provisional suggestions received so far for expressions of interest this year are as follows.*

- 1. SOBB'S – Brine Heritage Project contribution for Lido Park. Mentioned for consideration by Councillor Moy at Council 24 September 2018.*
- 2. May Flower 2020- Legacy component funding for the Droitwich Spa Heritage Centre and Museum. To enhance and upgrade the exhibition facilities and layout to improve the visitor experience. Possible options include internal reconfiguration ideas for example linking the radio room and main museum exhibition spaces and segregation from the DSTC upstairs reception area.*

RESOLVED That

1. New Homes Bonus – Agreement in principle to support applications as described & consultations for,
  - (a) The Droitwich Waterways (Pamela May) Trust electric boat and charging point £10,000.00
  - (b) The Norbury Theatre roof project £15,000.00
  
2. To invite Mr David Manning from WDC to the next scheduled full Council Meeting on 28.1.19 to receive further information about the Westlands Project in order to make an informed decision on the suggested NHB Application.
  
3. Community Legacy Scheme- Agreement in principle to proceed with two Expressions of Interest to WDC for projects as follows by the 23.11.18 receipt deadline.
  - (a) SOBB’S Brine Heritage contribution towards the Lido Park Brine Baths project.
  - (b) May Flower 2020 -Legacy component aspect with regard to improving the Heritage Centre and Museum facilities and visitor experience at St Richards House.

The meeting ended at 7.05 pm.

Chairman of Council -----  
28 January 2019





