

SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Town Council held on Tuesday 6th March 2007 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Swaffham.

Present: Cllr. S Matthews (in the Chair)

Cllr. P Buxton, Cllr. C Baker, Cllr. A Greaves, Cllr. T Jennison, Cllr. S Lister, Cllr. F Sharpe, Cllr. J Stockdale, Cllr. L Wise, Cllr. I Sherwood (7.04)

Town Clerk: Mr R Bishop
Assistant Town Clerk: Mrs R Noble

Public: 9

1120. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1120.1. Cllr Frances Mann who has work commitments

1120.2. Cllr Ian Sherwood (will try to get to the meeting) but may have work commitments

1120.3. Cllr Dave Cannon who has resigned from the Council with immediate effect.

1120.4. Cllr. D Butters who is not well.

1120.5. The Mayor read out Cllr. D Cannon's letter of resignation and paid tribute to his 8 years as a Councillor.

1121. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

1121.1. There were no declarations of interest.

1122. OFFER BY BRECKLAND COUNCIL to transfer the PUBLIC TOILETS/TIC

1122.1. The Clerk reported that the council have been notified this morning of the offer by Breckland Council to Transfer the Public Toilets will go before the Breckland Cabinet on 24th April. No refurbishment work can commence in advance of that date, although if the Council agreed to continue with the TIC in the current building Breckland would allow this to happen in advance of the building being passed to the Town Council. On behalf of the council the Town Clerk has indicated that the Town Council have a problem with the lesser commuted sum being offered to Swaffham on the basis that the TIC office could be commercially let. The Council agreed to accept a minimum of £215,000 including the £100,000 for refurbishment costs of the public toilets. The Town Clerk has argued the case on the basis that the known figure for refurbishment is £115,000 and the differential should be less than £60,000 for taking on the TIC building. It is suggested that Breckland meet the Council half-way at £245,000. This is going to cabinet on 24th April.

The options open to the Council are:-

1. To retain both the TIC and Toilets in their current position using their current footprint, but refurbish the toilets to the design previously discussed with Breckland Council.
2. To retain the TIC and Toilets in their current footprint, but explore the possibility of re-designing the interior of both buildings to accommodate an entrance to the toilets via the TIC building.
3. To retain the TIC in its current footprint and expand the footprint of the Toilets having a new entrance to the toilets left and right through the TIC building.

In each of the three options above the Council would need to let out part of the space to

a local taxi or bus company. In preliminary discussions with potential tenants they would not be against the idea of having access to the toilets via the TIC building. They would not be against the idea of charging for access to the toilets.

4. To move the TIC to the Museum at the Town Hall. There is already a number of leaflets provided within the Town Hall. This could be an option to explore, but it is important to finish the current project in order not to jeopardize the grant funding. There has been no indication of support or objections from the Directors. A formal approach from the Town Council would need to be made after 31st March 2007, if this was the preferred option.
5. To move the Toilets to the Museum at the Town Hall. The only possible location is within the cellar area. In discussions with the builder whilst this established that it was physically possible, it also was fraught with many practical problems that could prove to be expensive and difficult to maintain in the longer term. The building is also not open to the public for a substantial amount of time and the Museum Directors have indicated that they would be against this proposal.
6. To move the TIC to another premises such as Premier Travel. There has not been sufficient time to explore this option.
7. To let out the whole of the TIC building to give a regular income to pay for the cleaning of the toilets.

A discussion took place relating to the options. Cllr. I Sherwood proposed and Cllr. J Stockdale seconded to await the formal response from Breckland Council following the Cabinet meeting on 24th April. Subject to receiving match funding from Breckland Council; to look to provide an interim service within the current footprint of the TIC and Toilets for this year from the Spring Bank Holiday weekend in May. To continue to explore all options with the exception of No. 5 which seems to be impractical and against the will of the Museum Directors. To prepare tender documents on the letting out of commercial space in the TIC in part or in whole. To prepare tender documents for the purpose of instructing an architect. To discuss further with Breckland Council the form of interim arrangements that could be made in advance of 24th April.

It was unanimously agreed to await the formal response from Breckland Council following the Cabinet meeting on 24th April. Subject to receiving match funding from Breckland Council to look to provide an interim service within the current footprint of the TIC and Toilets for the this year from the Spring Bank Holiday weekend in May. To continue to explore all options with the exception of No. 5 which seems to be impractical and against the will of the Museum Directors. To prepare tender documents on the letting out of commercial space in the TIC in part or in whole. To prepare tender documents for the purpose of instructing an architect. To discuss further with Breckland Council the form of interim arrangements that could be made in advance of 24th April.

1123. ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS at the TOWN HALL.

1123.1. It was reported the outcome agreement from the conciliation meeting was circulated to councillors at the previous meeting. It was agreed to look at three options. Options 1 and 2 could be reduced by £5,000 by using the current lift installer Excelsior.

Options to consider:-

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1. A stair Riser up the stairwell to the Council Chamber

STAIR RISER cost £15,641

BUILDER cost £24,600

CONTINGENCY cost £6,036

TOTAL COST = £46,277

The Council have been informed that despite signing the agreement this should not be considered as an option. Requests have been made to verify the claims made by Mrs. Dickens. The Council have been refused permission to talk to the GP.

2. A 1100 x 1400 lifting platform in the Breckland Office

MIDI LIFT cost £15,153

BUILDER cost £19,500

CONTINGENCY cost £5,198

TOTAL COST £39,851

This option is the least costly option, but having the greatest impact on loss of office space and loss of space in the Council Chamber.

3. A 1100 X 1400 lifting platform in the area of the existing lift shaft

MIDILIFT cost £15,153

BUILDER cost £32,000

CONTINGENCY cost £7,073

TOTAL COST £54,226

This is the most expensive option but with the least impact on the building

A discussion took place relating to the lift options, it was suggested another option was to place a lift outside the building in the small courtyard. It was stated that 'option 3 should not be explored because of having to use money from the sale of allotment land'.

A discussion took place with regards to disabled people using the lift, it was suggested the council needs to get the message across that the lift is alright for some people to use who have disabilities and not to stay away from meeting because of media coverage in the papers that the lift is not suitable.

The Clerk reported that the council came out of the conciliation meeting with option 1 and that there is 3 months from the date of the conciliation meeting to deliver the agreement.

<p>It was unanimously agreed to suspend standing orders to allow Mr Tony Dickens to speak.</p>

1023.2. Mr Dickens thanked the council for being able to participate. He informed the council that most people with disabilities do need a carer with them. He stated the council are aware why the lift we have was not challenged at the time and it was agreed that the lift we ended up with was not the one it should have been. The Access Group worked with the Council and Architects on the disabled access and if the correct lift had been installed we would not have this problem now.

1023.3. It was suggested as we have a duty as a council to give a fair option, accept the Council Chamber is not accessible to some disabled people and move the meetings to another venue as a much cheaper option.

The Clerk stated that advice need to be sought from a structural engineer, building control officer and architect to guide the council through this process. To prepare specification and tender documents as appropriate. To firm up estimates and program work at the earliest opportunity. To use budgeted funds and reserves to meet the cost. To consider replenishing reserves on receipt of money from sale of surplus allotment land.

Following the discussions which took place Cllr. I Sherwood proposed and Cllr. J Stockdale seconded that the Clerk look at other areas of the budget to consider and not use reserves, also to explore options 1, 2, 3, placing a lift in the courtyard and using another venue for all meetings. This information to be brought before the Full Town Council Meeting on Wednesday 14th March 2007 if possible.

It was unanimously agreed the Clerk look at other areas of the budget to consider and not use reserves, also to explore options 1, 2, 3, placing a lift in the courtyard and using another venue for all meetings. This information to be brought before the Full Town Council Meeting on Wednesday 14th March 2007 if possible.

1124. OPEN SPACES & AMENITIES COMMITTEE with a delegation of the new ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION on Monday 12th March 2007 at 7pm in the Town Hall.

1124.1. The Mayor has requested that the Open Spaces Committee meet a delegation from the new allotments association next Monday evening to allow a report to be given at the full Council meeting on Wednesday 14th. A further circular letter was sent last week to all allotment holders affected by the notice to quit. This will be circulated to Councillors in the meeting pack for next week. The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Town Clerk agreed to issue a press statement in advance of the public meeting held yesterday evening. It is understood this was well attended and a number of councillors were also in attendance.

1124.2. The Clerk reported Mr. Hewson from the Shoulder of Mutton allotment site wishes to be allowed to collect his crop after 14th January 2008. The Town Clerk has explained that if things progress then there is a possibility that the land may be sold at that point. Nevertheless Mr. Hewson wished the Council to consider his request. He also claims to have fencing and sheds which were on the allotment long before he was a tenant.

It was unanimously agreed the current notice has been given to Mr. Hewson, who should be able to collect all his crops prior to 14th January 2008, therefore permission should be refused. In the case of the fencing and the sheds, these would be cleared by the Council.

1125. URGENT REPORTS at the Mayor's discretion, prior notice must be given.

1125.1. TOWN GROUP – It was reported a number of councillors have expressed their dismay at the first meeting of the Town Group held last week. Particularly disappointing that issues were raised by Icen Directors in full knowledge of how the new structure evolved. The issues that surround voting rights and consensus was disturbing and at the heart of everything the Council felt they re-negotiated the new structure. There was a feeling of anti-Town Council about the meeting and very few positive vibes. Perhaps it was too early for an open meeting of this type. The Objective 2 Group was not formed in this way. The attendance was more than the Icen AGM, but advertising was criticised – why? The Town Group could have easily been established in a steering capacity before opening things out to a wider audience. Following a short discussion: -

It was agreed to circulate the notes from the previous meeting to the wider audience prior to the next meeting on 4th April. To get the Town Group formally in place with the five other members elected and for the eleven members of the Group to choose their Chairman. To get the Town Group working as was originally intended within the new structure. This is as a Town Council Committee working within the partnership.

1125.2. The Clerk reported a recommendation will be put to Council next week as interviews have taken place for a Project Grant Support Officer – and we have an excellent candidate to put forward.