

CARTERTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE TOWN HALL
ON TUESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2018
COMMENCING AT 7.45 PM

Present: Cllr M McBride – Chairman
Cllr M Mead – Vice-Chairman

Cllr J Bull Cllr N Leverton
Cllr S Coul (from Item 117) Cllr L Little
Cllr R Crapper Cllr D Melvin
Cllr C Delaney Cllr P Scott
Cllr J Hayes Cllr C Wilson

Apologies: Cllr D Bulley, Cllr E Hatton, Cllr S Scott-Stovold, Cllr D Wesson
Cllr N Field-Johnson and Cllr P Handley (County Councillors)

Officers: Ron Spurs – Town Clerk

In attendance: Six members of the public

The meeting was preceded by a presentation by Carterton Football Club. Phil Godfrey, (Chairman) Michael Brennan (Vice-Chairman) and Andrew Walton (Head of Club Development & Funding) outlined the recent changes made to the Club and their plans for the future.

115 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

116 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 October 2018, previously circulated to Members, were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

117 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor had attended a number of events representing Carterton in the wider community as well as within the town:

- On 19 October, the Mayor attended the Brize Norton Recognition Awards for Valued and Outstanding Service (BRAVOS).
- On 26 October, the Interim Appraisal of the Town Clerk was carried out. Those involved had recently received training in Appraisals.
- On 26 October, the Mayor attended the Chairman of West Oxfordshire District Council's Civic Reception for Soldiers of Oxfordshire held in Woodstock.
- On 28 October, the Mayor attended the Afternoon Tea for the Retirement of Rev & Mrs Blakey at St John's Church.
- On 30 October, the Deputy Mayor attended the Lord Lieutenant's Award Ceremony at Christchurch in Oxford.
- During the last week of October and the beginning of November, the Mayor and Cllr Hatton attended all five Primary Schools in Carterton, visiting every class to assist the children to make poppies for the display on Remembrance Sunday.

- On 9 November, the Mayor attended the South Oxfordshire District Council Race Night.
- On 10 November, the Mayor and his wife attended a Murder Mystery Night hosted by the Mayor of Didcot.
- On 11 November, Remembrance Service at St John's Church, followed by the laying of Wreaths at the War Memorial. A lot of work had gone into organising the Ceremony and it went very well on the day, with many positive comments received.
- On 17 November, the Mayor attended the Lantern-making Workshop at Carterton Community Centre

Future events were as follows:

- Friday 30 November – Christmas Lights switch-on, with Robert Courts MP.
- The venue for the Town Council Christmas Dinner on 5 December had been changed to The Beehive. The Mayor asked for a show of hands for those intending to come.
- The Mayor had recently met with the new Station Commander at RAF Brize Norton who had offered a visit round the base for Members of the Council in early December. This had been arranged for 12 December from 9.00am to 3.30pm.

118 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's Report, copies of which had previously been circulated, was received. The Report is attached at Annex 'A'. See below.

119 ADJOURNMENT FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO RAISE MATTERS

The members of the public present did not wish to speak.

120 ADJOURNMENT FOR COUNTY COUNCILLORS TO RAISE MATTERS

Cllr Handley had sent his apologies for this meeting. Cllr Field-Johnson was also unable to attend, but had sent a report, which the Clerk would circulate to Members.

121 PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council received the Minutes of the Meetings of the Planning Committee held on 16 October 2018. These were noted.

122 URGENCY COMMITTEE MEETING

Council received the Minutes of the Urgency Committee held on 26 October 2018. The Committee had been convened for approval of the following:

- (a) Payment of an Invoice for £4,000 relating to the recent Subject Access Request.
- (b) Items recommended by the Events Working Group for this year's Christmas Lights event - the purchase of a Snow Machine at a cost of £874 plus consumables, Steam Engine for display at a cost of £200 (plus £200 from the Mayor's Allowance) and an additional £2,000 towards the cost of the Lanterns, on a draw-down basis.

The Minutes were noted.

123 MAYOR'S ALLOWANCE ACCOUNT AND ANCILLARY MATTERS

The Clerk suggested that Cllr Little leave the room while this item was discussed but she declined.

Council received a report from the Town Clerk giving an update on the Council's resolution made on 23 January 2018 to recover £4,835 from Cllr L Little, which the Council alleged was a misappropriation of funds in three areas:

(a) A sum of £4,000 paid to Ted Little Veterans Home. The Council requested documents to confirm the Trust status of the TLVH, which had not been provided, and the Council could only conclude that the payment was not bona fide.

(b) Payments from the Mayor's Allowance Account for civic functions. Four payments had been made to other councils totalling £315. This had not been refunded by Cllr Little and the Council could only conclude that she had acted in breach of trust and fiduciary duty.

(c) Guests for the St George's Day Dinner 2017. Out of the 64 people who attended the Dinner income was only received from 49 guests, with those not paying having been given free tickets by Cllr Little totalling £520. The cost to the Council in pursuing this matter was £2,196 so far.

Cllr Little made a claim of civil harassment against the whole Council and the Clerk, which was later narrowed to four Councillors and the Clerk, with no further proceedings being issued. Cllr Little then issued a Subject Access Request under the GDPR for all documentation, emails and correspondence involving herself over a period of just under three years. Council sought legal assistance to manage this request at a cost of £14,090.

The Clerk asked Cllr Wilson about the statement she had made at a Council meeting that the Council was not covered by insurance for this matter and asked where she had obtained this information. She said she had telephoned the insurance company. The Clerk said that her statement was incorrect as the Council's insurers had agreed to indemnify the Council.

Based on the legal advice received, the Council had taken the proper steps to defend itself against the allegations of harassment and investigations into the donations made by Cllr Little were warranted. A Civil Court would be likely to conclude that Cllr Little had misappropriated the funds. The Council had written to Cllr Little on a number of occasions to offer mediation, but all attempts had been declined. Legal proceedings had therefore been initiated and a press statement would be issued after this meeting. In order to reduce the immediate impact to local charities, the Mayor would donate £835 from his Allowance to make up part of the shortfall.

Cllr Little asked that it be recorded that she would be happy to defend herself in Court. She said she believed the Council was corrupt as it would not initiate an independent inquiry. She was asked to withdraw her statement, but she declined and left the meeting. Cllr Wilson and two members of the public also left at this point.

124 APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Council had received the following applications:

(a) OXPIP. An application had been received for £2,000 to continue to provide counselling services for Carterton families. Cllr Coul pointed out that it was against Council policy to award a grant to the same organisation more than once in a financial year and suggested they re-apply in the next financial year.

(b) Clean Slate, an Oxfordshire based charity providing confidential and specialist listening and support services for victims of physical, emotional, mental and sexual abuse, had applied for a grant of £1,105, which represented 10% of the running costs for their service. Council felt this was a worthwhile cause and RESOLVED to APPROVE the award of £1,105.

125 AMENITIES WORK FOR AUTHORISATION

(a) Swinbrook Road. Fell suppressed Black Pine tree overhanging 32 Swinbrook Road at a cost of £700.

(b) Town Hall - Upgrade of entrance door. The existing door is difficult for the elderly/disabled and parents with pushchairs to negotiate. It does not stay open unless propped and does not close properly unless locked. Quotations were sought from three companies, of which BH Doors & Engineering Ltd were the only company to come out to see the current door. It was proposed that their quote be accepted at a cost of £2,636.82.

(c) Verge in Alvescot Road. Continuous reports had been received this year from residents of the new houses adjacent to the Veterinary Surgery in Alvescot Road that the grass verge was being damaged by vehicles parking to visit the Vets. It was proposed that four low maintenance Durapol verge markers be installed at a cost of £12.62 each to dissuade drivers from parking there. The total cost would be £50.48 plus VAT and installation.

A vote was taken, with all in favour. Council RESOLVED to APPROVE the above works.

126 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The Financial Statement to 31 October 2018, set out at Annex B, was APPROVED.

127 INCOME RECEIVED

Income Received during October 2018, previously circulated, was Noted.

128 DEBIT CARD TRANSACTIONS

Debit Card transactions for October 2018, previously circulated, were Noted.

129 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

The Accounts for Payment for November 2018, set out at Annex C, were Noted.

Cllr Scott commented that it was a misrepresentation of funds for the Council to pay solicitors fees in respect of the claims against individuals by Cllr Little. The Clerk said that the Council's insurers had agreed to indemnify the Councillors and staff in relation to this. Cllr Coul said that a Subject Access Request could be made by any resident and the Council had to ensure it fulfilled its requirements under GDPR.

Council RESOLVED that the Accounts for November 2018, set out at Annex C, be APPROVED for payment.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm.

11 December 2018

Town Mayor

1. Diary Dates

Friday 30 November	Christmas Lights Switch-On
Tuesday 4 December	Planning & Administration
Tuesday 11 December	Planning & Town Council
Monday 24 December	Town Hall closes for Christmas
Wednesday 2 January	Town Hall reopens
Tuesday 22 January	Planning & Town Council

These were noted.

**R Spurs
Town Clerk**