

CARTERTON TOWN COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING  
ON TUESDAY 19 JANUARY 2021  
COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM

Present: Cllr N Leverton – Chairman  
Cllr J Bull - Vice-Chairman

Cllr S Baylis (from Item 132) Cllr C James  
Cllr C Cook Cllr M McBride  
Cllr R Crapper Cllr M Mead  
Cllr M Crossland Cllr D Wesson  
Cllr P Handley Cllr K Wood

Absent: Cllr E Hatton, Cllr J Sangster

In attendance: Cllr N Field-Johnson (County Councillor)  
Several members of the public

Officers: Ron Spurs – Town Clerk  
Katie Zasada

126 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Wood - Item Payments relating to Allotments (Committee Member and allotment holder).

127 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 December 2020, previously circulated to Members, were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman. Cllr Handley and Cllr Little abstained.

128 PLANNING COMMITTEE

Council received the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 15 December 2020, which were Noted.

129 URGENCY COMMITTEE

Council received the Minutes of the Meeting of the Urgency Committee held on 22 December 2020, convened to approve the payment of £1,873 to West Oxfordshire District Council for a Planning Application for the proposed replacement of the Pavilion on Alvescot Road Recreation Ground. This had been approved unanimously by the Committee.

The Minutes were Noted.

130 ADJOURNMENT FOR MEMBERS OF PUBLIC TO RAISE MATTERS

Linda Moore asked why the Minutes of the Urgency Committee had not been made available for the public to view since October 2019. Under Accounts for Payment, she asked why the accounts had not been published for the public to view since April 2020. Under Item 135, she wondered why a Motion of No Confidence had been made against Cllr Little but not against the other Council Members who had started and continued with this case, particularly as between August 2018 and April 2020 it had cost Carterton residents over £62,000. Perhaps a

public inquiry is called for. The Clerk would contact Linda regarding her questions on the Urgency Committee Minutes and Accounts.

Jason Mead spoke on the Motion of No Confidence in Cllr Little regarding the Small Claims Court decision. He commented on one particular aspect of the Court findings that stated that Cllr Little could not be liable for the payment of ticket money for tickets issued free of charge to friends and family of Linda Little for the St George's Day Dinner held at the Officers' Mess on RAF Brize Norton as there was no specific wording that said she could not give away as many tickets as she liked. Jason said he was at the Dinner and had paid £40 in full for his ticket, as he had done on many occasions for the events aimed at raising funds and raising awareness for local charities and good causes. He had helped out at many such events, decorating halls, helping to organise and generally helping, but had never not paid the full price for a ticket. This was supposed to be for charity and not personal gain. To then find out after that his donation had been used to subsidise Cllr Little's friends and family was not why he chose to attend or donate. To use his donation in this way was, in his opinion, morally corrupt, if not theft. Never before or since have so many people attended whilst being subsidised with charity funds. Cllr Little has twice before had a Vote of No Confidence against her. She had ignored the results of the majority and therefore has no morals.

John Hayes said he would like to clarification of the cost to date regarding the legal proceedings against Cllr Little and asked if these costs could be made public. The Clerk would take this forward.

The Chairman thanked the members of the public for their comments.

#### 131 ADJOURNMENT FOR COUNTY COUNCILLORS TO RAISE MATTERS

(a) Cllr Field-Johnson – Burford and North Carterton. Cllr Field-Johnson's report had been circulated to Councillors prior to this meeting, which focussed on setting the County's budget for the year, which is under considerable pressure due to Covid-19. Sixty percent of the £800m budget is spent on Social Care.

The County has approved the sum of £40,000 to fix the pumping system in the underpass on Upavon Way. The new equipment will be located above ground in a cabinet.

Discussions continue on the new link from Carterton to the A40 towards the west, though this is likely to be a year or two away.

Last year he provided funding to the Got2Be charity towards their local youth work and he asked for any feedback on their work in Carterton, with a view to offering them further support from his Priority Fund. The Clerk would send him a report.

(b) Cllr Handley – South and West Carterton. Cllr Handley had a meeting with Highways yesterday concerning an unspent amount of around £3,500 from S106 money earmarked for double yellow lines in Rock Road, which was decided should not go ahead. Together with money from his community fund, he is looking into using this towards temporary repairs to the car park to the front of Lloyds Chemist.

Plans would be drawn up shortly for alterations to the Crossroads in the town centre and initial costings were around £400,000-£500,000.

He is working with Cllr Field-Johnson on the new A40 slip roads, as well as all the other junctions around Carterton with a view to improving traffic flow. Designs for the new slip roads were being drawn up to produce costings to enable funding for the project to be sourced.

The design brief had been agreed for the new Fire Station and work is expected to commence in late Autumn 2021 with a view to completion in 2022.

Cllr Mead expressed her thanks to the County Councillors for their work for the town. She said she noted that funding from the government's Active Travel Budget for West Oxfordshire had been given to Witney but not to Carterton. She asked that the County Councillors lobby for support to improve Carterton's cycle paths, particularly at the front of the main gates to RAF Brize Norton where accidents are more common.

Cllr Crossland too expressed her thanks for their hard work, particularly for the resurfacing of the road through Brizewood. However, she had noticed that the top dressing on the road was already showing signs of wear and asked if this could be looked at. Cllr Handley would take this back to Highways.

The Chairman thanked the County Councillors for their reports.

## 132 ADJOURNMENT FOR DISTRICT COUNCILLORS TO RAISE MATTERS

Cllr Bull - Carterton North West, Inclusion Champion and member of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Cllr Bull had been assisting a resident with an issue regarding perimeter fencing backing onto MOD land. Witney Town Council had recently set up an Inclusion Committee and she looked forward to being part of that as part of her role as Inclusion Champion for WODC. She was honoured to be a volunteer to help with marshalling at the Carterton Surgery for the start of the Covid vaccinations last week. The session ran very smoothly and those receiving their jabs were very pleased with the service offered.

Cllr Crossland – Carterton North West. Cllr Crossland had concerns that a planning application approved by the Lowlands Planning Committee might have an adverse effect on parking on Burford Road. She suggested the Council look at the bylaws preventing parking on grass verges along main roads in the town to enforce the bylaws already in place. The Clerk confirmed he was looking into this.

Cllr Leverton - Carterton South and Armed Forces Champion. Cllr Leverton had accompanied Cllr Field-Johnson to look at the flooded underpass on Upavon Way. Together with Cllr Bull, he has a meeting of the Environment and Social Committee this week where they will be discussing domestic violence. As the Armed Forces Champion, he had attended Zoom meetings looking at improvements to the Armed Forces Covenant that will be going through Parliament soon.

Cllr McBride – Carterton North East and Deputy Chairman of the WODC Environment Committee. Cllr McBride had been assisting residents having problems with trees and, along with Cllr MacRae, resolving problems with the emptying of dog waste bins. Dog waste can now be put into general litter bins.

Cllr Mead – Carterton South, Cabinet Member for Health and Leisure and Leader of WODC. Cllr Mead reported that a Mass Vaccination Centre would be opened on 25 January 2021 at the Kassam Stadium in Oxford for anyone invited for a Covid vaccination within a 45-minute travelling distance. If anyone invited to the Kassam could not get there they would still be able to receive the vaccination via their GP surgery. West Oxfordshire had already begun to invite the Over 70s for their jabs this week. A mobile testing centre will be at Monahan Way Pavilion on 20 and 27 January, then on 3, 10, 17 and 24 February. She had written a letter to every resident in West Oxfordshire giving details of how to get help and assistance during the national lockdown.

## 133 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor began by wishing everyone a Happy New Year. He then requested a minute's silence in honour of those who had lost their lives due to the Covid-19 virus and their families.

After the Christmas break a package was received at the Town Hall containing Thank You letters from children at Edith Moorhouse Primary School for supplying them with Lantern-making equipment. The project had received very positive feedback and he expressed his thanks to all those who had made the Lantern Project a success, in particular Cllr Hatton, Gill Carver and Ted Foster.

He had been invited by Carterton Health Centre, as a Carterton resident, to assist with manning and managing the car park during the first round of Covid vaccinations and he expressed his thanks to all those who volunteered. Over a three-day period over 1,000 doses were given to those aged over 80. As an indication of how busy they were, one of the doctors said that she had walked over seven miles inside the building in one shift.

He had been approached by a member of the public about a Freedom of Information request regarding the circumstances and departure of the previous Clerk. The Town Hall does not have the paperwork relating to this and he believed this may be held by Cllr Little, in which case he asked if it could be returned. Failing this, the HR company that dealt with this would be contacted. The request would be taken forward once it had been received in writing.

The Council had issued a press statement yesterday that read as follows:

*As the Chairman of Carterton Town Council, I can confirm that the Council has in the last six months received just under £34,000 in Court costs from Linda Little. This relates to an unsuccessful Court action brought by Linda Little claiming £20,000 damages from Carterton Town Council alleging bullying and harassment by the Council against her. All of the allegations made by Linda Little were considered in full by a District Judge and found to be untrue and the case was dismissed.*

*More recently, Carterton Town Council asked for funds spent from the Mayor's Account by Linda Little when she was Town Mayor which were highlighted in an Internal Audit Report to be returned to the Council via a Small Claims Court case. The Council was successful in part in that Linda Little was ordered by the Judge to pay the Council's costs for the case and also instructed Linda Little to repay £315 to Council. This related to payments for dinners which should have been paid from Linda Little's personal bank account but were paid from the Mayor's Account, which contains funds for charity. Linda Little has paid the costs and the £315 to Council which will be distributed by the current Mayor, myself, to local charities.*

## 134 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Clerk reported that the Town Hall Kitchen refurbishment was nearing completion and Carterton Building Supplies had done a great job. He expressed his thanks to Cllr Bull for her advice regarding shutters for the serving hatch and work is underway to source a shutter that fulfils current regulations.

Town Hall Staff continue to work from home and have attended the office only when absolutely necessary since the start of the national lockdown. The Team were in good morale and Council business continues as best as possible in these challenging circumstances.

Cllr McBride presented a signed Motion of No Confidence, seconded by Cllr Bull, which read as follows:

*A Small Claims Court held in September 2020 gave the following judgement against Cllr Little: 'It is ordered that judgement for the claimant for £315 and claimant's court fees of £540 making a total of £855 payable by 14 December'. This judgement confirmed that Cllr Little has brought the Council into disrepute by her behaviour in misusing charity funds and her betrayal of trust. This Council has lost all confidence in Cllr Little in her capacity as a Parish Councillor and deems her no longer fit to be a Councillor so calls on her to resign from the Council forthwith.*

He said he brought this Motion with mixed feelings – relief that the long legal process is finally at an end but expressed his concern that Cllr Little had offered no apology to the Council for dragging it through the Courts on a vexatious harassment claim, in which she claimed £20,000 from the Council or, more accurately, from the taxpayers of Carterton. This claim was thrown out by the Court and costs awarded to the Council of £33,921. She has also not offered an apology to the Town Clerk or the individual Councillors she originally initiated the action against before switching the action to the whole Council. The residents of Carterton also deserved an apology as well as the charities that have been disadvantaged by the misuse of charity funds. He invited all Councillors to support this vote of No Confidence.

Cllr Mead said it was sad that it had come to this, but it had been a shadow over the Council for years and she applauded the way the Council had handled the situation. This could have been sorted out right at the beginning, but Cllr Little had sued the Council and the Council had to defend itself. It was disappointing that money given by residents in good faith to charities supported and promoted by the Council had been misused in this way. She therefore had to support the Motion.

Cllr Handley said that Councillors should be made aware of the full facts in order to vote on this. He had concerns with the way the matter had been dealt with and it was clear from the judgement that this was an error where the money was put into the wrong account and was not misappropriated. He read out a section from the 2011 Localism Act that stated that a Motion of No Confidence can only be brought against the Chairman of the Council or Chairman of a Committee. He would therefore not support the Motion.

Cllr Wesson said he would abstain as he did not have sufficient facts to form an opinion.

Cllr Leverton was also disappointed that his £40 ticket money had been misused. He clarified that the Council had not suggested the £4,000 had been misused but had concerns that it was held in a bank account when other Carterton charities could have benefitted from it. He wished to remind Cllr Little of the Minutes of the Council Meeting held in December 2017 that read as follows:

*Cllr Leverton reminded the Mayor of what she had said in the newspaper article that if there was any doubt that she had not followed correct procedures that she would resign as a Councillor.*

Cllr Wood said that she was new to the Council but on taking advice and reading up on the Nolan Principles she could see that Cllr Little had not adhered to the Nolan Principles, particularly 1.2 Integrity, 1.4 Accountability, 1.5 Openness and 1.6 Honesty.

Cllr Bull seconded the Motion because she believed Cllr Little had had many opportunities to settle this unfortunate situation but she only sought to make things worse. The Council had no choice but to defend itself against the alleged harassment claim brought by Cllr Little, which

had now been shown to be wholly false by the District Judge. The judgement showed that Cllr Little should not have used charitable funds in the way she did. Councillors have a duty to the Town and District that they served to be honest and trustworthy and she believed that the judgement proved that Cllr Little was neither and she urged her fellow Councillors to support the Motion.

A vote was taken. There were seven votes in favour and two against. Cllr Cook, Cllr James and Cllr Wesson abstained.

Council RESOLVED that the Motion of No Confidence in Cllr Little was carried.

#### 136 WORKS FOR AUTHORISATION

(a) Town Hall. Following the six-monthly inspection of the Emergency Lighting in the building, four lights had failed the test. The contractor recommended that all eight lights should be updated to LED at a cost of £672 plus VAT.

Council RESOLVED to APPROVE the replacement of the Emergency Lighting with LED.

#### 137 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The Bank Reconciliation Statement to 31 December 2020, set out at Annex A, was noted.

#### 138 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Council RESOLVED that the Accounts for January 2021, set out at Annex B, be APPROVED for payment.

#### 139 PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

RESOLVED that as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the Press and Public be excluded from the Meeting.

Confidential items follow.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

140 MINUTES OF TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Confidential item.

141 COVID-19 – IMPACT ON TENANTS OCCUPYING COUNCIL PROPERTY

Confidential item.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm.

16 February 2021

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Town Mayor