



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
HEDNESFORD TOWN COUNCIL**
Tuesday 7th December 2021 at 19:00

**Meeting held at Pye Green Community Centre, Bradbury Lane, Hednesford.
Members of the public were invited to attend in person and online via Zoom.
The meeting was also live streamed to the Council Facebook page.**

Present:

Cllr Emma Hunneyball (Mayor)
Cllr Kathryn Downs (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr Arthur Roden
Cllr Debbie Cartwright
Cllr Garry Jones
Cllr Laura Harrison
Cllr Mandy Dunnnett
Cllr Paul Woodhead
Cllr Sharon Jagger

In Attendance:

Officers: Michelle Baker (Operations and Regeneration Manager / Proper Officer), Ginetta Adams (Community Centre and Administration Officer), Sandie Morris (Responsible Finance Officer RFO).

Members of Public:

14 members of the public attended. Local Police were also in attendance.

Public Participation:

Cllr Kathryn Downs read out a statement to the public addressing the online abuse that Councillors had been subjected to in recent days, summarising the good work that had been achieved by the Council over the past 18 months and reinforcing the message that we should all be kind and respectful of one another. The statement addressed the public anger following the leak of confidential information surrounding the lease of Pye Green Community Centre.

Mayor Emma Hunneyball explained to the members of the public present in the room and online that a confidential Council paper had been leaked to the public prior to Council having the opportunity to discuss and resolve. This leak had led to the interest surrounding the Council meeting and Mayor Hunneyball confirmed that the Council would answer as many questions as they could during the public section of the meeting.

This was followed by a lively question and answer session with questions from the public regarding the future of Pye Green Community Centre and the Council Paper to be discussed in private business tonight.

Councillors confirmed that they wished to dispel rumours circulating online and said they could confirm that all options contained within the confidential Council Paper to be discussed this evening retained Pye Green Community Centre as a local community centre and they also confirmed that no organisation was being granted sole hire of the centre.

Any questions relating directly to the detailed contents of the confidential Council Paper could not be answered as the Paper had not yet been considered, discussed or debated by Council and to do so would breach Standing Orders.

1. Apologies – Cllr Darrell Mawle due to holiday.

2. Declarations of Interest – Cllr Debbie Cartwright advised that she had submitted a formal request to the Council which will be read out by Michelle Baker on her behalf in relation to agenda item 6.i. Cllr Cartwright also advised that in respect to agenda item 10, Chase Lighthouse (an organisation she had co-founded) were users of Pye Green Community Centre (PGCC) and that she wished to raise a declaration of interest.

Mayor Emma Hunneyball advised that she also wished to raise a declaration of interest in respect of agenda item 10 which she would discuss further in private business.

3. Minutes. To review and approve the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 2nd November 2021.

Cllr Debbie Cartwright and Cllr Laura Harrison said they would like it publicly noted that they would have preferred that the PGCC hirers were consulted reference the item in private business.

The Task Force members requested it to be noted that this would not have been possible whilst complying with the Council's duty of care as an employer and it would have been at high risk of having a prejudicial impact on the commercial operations of the community centre.

Cllr Arthur Roden requested that it be noted that he had been excluded from the vote on the item in private business as he was asked to leave the meeting, due to his conduct in the meeting.

Proposed Cllr Mandy Dunnett

Seconded Cllr Garry Jones

Resolved by unanimous vote (9 votes), minutes approved.

4. Mayor's Announcements

I. Christmas lights switch on event. – Mayor Emma Hunneyball congratulated all involved in organising the event and said it had been hugely successful with a combination of market traders, community stalls, school choirs and attractions such as stilt walkers and illuminated fairies.

II. Cancelled November Farmers and Craft Market due to weather. – It was unfortunate that November's market had to cancel due to heavy snow.

III. Next Market Sat 11th December with snow globe. – The life-size snow globe will feature at our next market which is free for visitors to come and have their photo taken inside, the Nutcracker trail is also in town.

IV. Opening of The Village pub. - Mayor Emma Hunneyball said she was honoured to be asked to open this new venue in town, which intends to host a range of events.

V. Fireworks panto. – The local charity Fireworks that supports children's mental health and wellbeing have organised a free pantomime for the local community. Due to the snow on Saturday it was cancelled and moved to the Sunday with Mayor Hunneyball in attendance.

Extra Item – Mayor Emma Hunneyball attended a carol concert hosted by Hednesford Town Football Club which was a wonderful event with the Salvation Army also participating.

5. Update from the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO)

I. Draft budget 2022 / 23 and precept deadline. – A draft budget has been circulated to all Councillors in advance of the meeting and necessitated feedback from Councillors. Sandie Morris said the Council is awaiting the estimated precept figure from Cannock Chase District Council and once received this will be added to the budget.

6. Items from the Operations and Regeneration Manager

I. Formal request received from Chase Lighthouse – Michelle Baker read out the formal request from Cllr Debbie Cartwright on behalf of Chase Lighthouse, requesting permission to use Pye Green Community Centres reception area for the community food table every Sunday during the winter months to prevent service users having to wait outside in the cold. Cllr Debbie Cartwright agreed that if granted, she would not leave the area unattended until the key holder (staff) returned to lock up when the dance class had finished and that she would work around current hirers so as not to create additional work for the keyholder.

Proposed Cllr Laura Harrison

Seconded Cllr Arthur Roden

Resolved permission given by 8 votes, Cllr Paul Woodhead abstained.

II. Verbal update on events. – Michelle Baker advised that the life-size Snow Globe will be in town for free photo opportunities on Friday 10th and Saturday 11th December, this has been funded by the EU Welcome Back fund. The final Farmers and Craft market of the year will be held this Saturday 11th December.

7. Reports from Committee Chairs, Principal Speakers and Councillors

I. Planning – Cllr Sharon Jagger to note the attached list of planning applications

(enclosed agenda page 8 to 9). – The paper is contained within the agenda pack and has been forwarded to Cannock Chase District Council.

II. Cllr Emma Hunneyball Paper on Bleed Kits will be deferred to next Council meeting.

– Postponed to the next Full Council meeting.

III. Cllr Laura Harrison Paper for a Miners Memorial Grant will be deferred to next Council meeting. - Postponed to the next Full Council meeting.

8. Items for Information and next agenda

Cllr Sharon Jagger requested that 'Railway Station Update' was added to the next agenda.

To resolve that the public be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

9. Private and Confidential Business

Abbreviated minutes detailing the salient points only due to the item being held in private business and confidential matters discussed.

Mayor Emma Hunneyball raised a declaration of interest as her child is a member of the Scouts. Cllr Debbie Cartwright raised a declaration of interest as an organisation she had co-founded (Chase Lighthouse) utilised Pye Green Community Centre.

Both were confirmed as a declaration of interest and not a conflict of interest.

Cllr Kathryn Downs presented the confidential Paper on Pye Green Community Centre. The four options presented in the Council Paper were thoroughly discussed for around one hour.

Cllr Laura Harrison stated that she would like there to be an amendment to one of the options, to offer current hirers the opportunity to tender for the running of the centre. Councillors stated that this request could have been seriously considered had the disclosure of confidential Council papers not occurred and that unfortunately the breach meant that staff and hirers were now experiencing misinformation and anxiety to the extent that a prolonged tender process could be irrecoverably damaging to all parties; this was regrettable given the public views heard.

Vote on amendment to wording in Option 1

Proposed Cllr Laura Harrison

Seconded Cllr Debbie Cartwright

Voted to approve amendment to wording in Option 1 approved by majority.

Cllr Kathryn Downs read the Council Paper's recommendation, Option 2 which was:

Council approves the transfer of the PGCC lease to 1st Hednesford Scouts, relocation of the Council to Hednesford Library or other town centre location, and implementation of homeworking in April 2022, subject to legal and contractual discourse. Additionally, that Finance, Personnel and Operations (FPOps) Committee is tasked with reviewing the remit and budget implications of retaining the Operations & Regeneration Manager and Community Centre and Administration Officer, with a view to no overall reduction in hours/salary.

Proposed Cllr Kathryn Downs

Seconded Cllr Garry Jones

Voted for

Mayor Cllr Emma Hunneyball, Cllr Kathryn Downs, Cllr Mandy Dunnett, Cllr Sharon Jagger, Cllr Garry Jones, Cllr Paul Woodhead.

Voted against Cllr Debbie Cartwright, Cllr Laura Harrison, Cllr Arthur Roden.

Resolved by 6 votes in favour of recommendation Option 2.

MEETING END.