



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF HEDNESFORD TOWN COUNCIL

Wednesday 4th October 2023 AT 7.00 PM

Meeting held at Pye Green Community Centre, Bradbury Lane, Hednesford, WS12 4EP

The Meeting was opened at 7pm by Councillor Alan Pearson - Chair

Present:

Clr Alan Pearson (Chair)
Clr Ronald Turville
Clr Ann Turville
Clr Sheila Cartwright
Clr Annette Walker
Clr Arthur Roden
Clr Sharon Jagger
Clr Laura Harrison
Clr Paul Jones – Late Arrival

In attendance from Hednesford Town Council:

Matt Johnson – Community Engagement Officer
Cheryl Kinsella – Responsible Finance Officer

Members of the Public:

There were members of the public present.

1. Public Participation

Shaun Middleton [Hednesford in Partnership] spoke with reference to item 9 on tonight's agenda [finance]: Shaun asked which committee would be considering recommendations and budgetary requirements for April 2024 as HiP would welcome the opportunity to speak with that committee to ascertain the level of support the Council is considering for next year's Hednesford Summer Festival. Cllr. Pearson confirmed that would be the Finance, Personnel & Operations Committee [FP&Ops] and HiP would be invited to the relevant meeting of that committee. Cllr. Pearson confirmed there is a cheque outstanding to HiP for their upcoming Christmas Event, Council will be addressing raising of that cheque under finance tonight at agenda item 9.

Darrell Mawle asked the Council not to cancel Hednesford's monthly market. The market is very well known throughout the area, and he asked Councillors not to cancel it. He had volunteered on the market regularly and everybody looks forward

to this market, it is well loved and hopefully it will keep going. Cllr Pearson confirmed that Council would take those comments on board.

David Wisehall [Heart of Hednesford CIC] showed the meeting a photograph of the railway wagon he had just purchased as part of his station improvement project. This being the final piece rolling stock for the project. Restoration of the wagon will probably be done on site - tidying up the bodywork, sandblasting the underneath and painting it. He expressed his thanks to Matt Johnson for facilitating a meeting with the Museum of Cannock Chase last week. They'd had a really good conversation and had confirmed their support. Good links had also been made with Chasewater Railway. He also expressed his concern that Cllr. Jagger thinks it appropriate to question members of the public on what's happening with their group and he also asked if it's appropriate to ask questions about the structure of the group on social media. Cllr Jagger apologised. Cllr. Walker said Mr Wisehall's tone was aggressive, and that Councillors should receive respect for the job they're in. Cllr. Pearson said he does not want the public to come in and start arguing with councillors.

Mandy Dunnett reiterated what Darrell Mawle had said about the market. She said she has marshalled at every market bar one since the very beginning and she knows that people come from far afield to visit the market each month including one person she knows comes by train from Birmingham because they love the market so much. She explained she had spoken to every shop owner in Hednesford as part of a piece of research for the District Council before the closure of the Rugeley Indoor Market and only one person was negative about the market – they all rely on it every month they know they're going to be extra busy so the impact upon them should be remembered too.

Kathryn Downs reiterated the same point. The market is a great asset to the town of Hednesford – at its peak it was attracting 8,000 visitors into the town on a monthly basis. She pointed out the outstanding occupancy rate for stalls compared to any other town. The level of footfall has fallen away recently she believes that is due to the lack of entertainment which was previously provided to attract people into the market and she asked that when considering options later in the meeting that Council consider whether there might be an opportunity for utilising funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to pay for bringing the entertainment back to the market, to draw a bigger audience in.

Garry Jones spoke to apologise for his interruption of council business at last month's meeting. He explained the reason for his interruption during discussion at agenda item 6 [change of role title from mayor to chair] was because of the last-minute ad-hoc change to that motion and he had wanted to remind Council of Standing Order number 8 which sets out the limitations for bringing motions back. For an individual councillor to bring a motion back to the table, 6 months must elapse, or alternatively any 3 councillors can bring any motion back at any time. He said that a motion which says the decision is for the "whole length of the administration" is not a valid motion. Garry Jones explained to Cllr. Pearson that he had made a motion at the last meeting which contravened this Council's own rules and that was the reason he felt the need to speak out. Cllr. Pearson said Council would have to take a look at the way in which motions are put forward.

Cllr. Roden pointed out that there had been interruptions by three members of the public at last month's meeting, but Garry Jones' interruption was the only one shouted down.

Cllr. Jagger responded to Garry Jones saying that she was not at that meeting but from seeing the Minutes she has actually raised similar concerns in writing [applying Standing Order 6f which states that the role which Cllr. Pearson currently occupies has a duration of one year] she feels that it is not correct that he should impose his personal choice for any length further than the length of his own tenure in the role. Cllr. Jagger feels this needs to be looked into, as she doesn't agree that it was the correct process, and she will bring this up in the meeting.

Cllr. Ann Turville said she believed it was permitted to bind the decision for the duration of 4 years although any councillor could bring the motion back to the table in 6 months' time.

Cllr. Jagger said the Minutes clearly show that an amendment was raised by Cllr. Roden but no a seconder wasn't asked for so that amendment wasn't voted on. She feels that process was not followed.

Cllr. Pearson closed the meeting to the public and said that nobody from the public should be speaking further during the meeting.

2. Apologies :

Cllr Debbie Cartwright

3. Declaration of Interest

None

4. Previous Minutes

The Draft Minutes from the full council meeting of 13th September were reviewed. Cllr. Harrison said she had noted several mistakes in the Minutes. Cllr. Pearson acknowledged there were several amendments to be made.

Cllr. Jagger said she had not been at that meeting but upon receiving the Minutes she had written to full council to express her concerns about Council's resolution of item 6 on page 3. Cllr. Pearson asked Cllr. Jagger to read her email aloud to the room. Cllr. Jagger summarised by saying that the motion related to the prerogative of Cllr. Pearson and that Council could not be bound by the decision for four years, only for the duration of Cllr. Pearson's own tenure in the role [i.e: until May 2024]. The Minutes clearly show that Cllr. Roden raised an amendment to that motion, but the Minutes do not record if the Chair had asked for a seconder or whether that amendment was voted on.

Cllr. Pearson confirmed that the 4 year will not stand because of the 6 month rule, which had just been pointed out.

There was discussion around whether the Minutes accurately reflect what took place at the meeting on 13th September. Cllr. Jagger asked if Council could leave approval of the Minutes in abeyance as there were obviously lots of things which are not correct. Cllr. Harrison said that would be a breach of process.

Proposed by Cllr. Pearson: Acceptance of the Minutes subject to all the amendments spoken of – Unanimous agreement.

5. Statement from Councillor Pearson

Cllr. Pearson stated and reminded fellow Councillors that the role of being a Councillor is about working for the benefit of all, and he felt that some councillors were not complying with that ethos.

6. Report from Duncan Rollo – Cannock Community Safety Partnership

DR confirmed that his remit includes line management of CCTV system, data protection, GDPR and general reviews.

HTC meetings being moved to Wednesdays has caused him some problems, but he will try to attend and report to us once a quarter.

He provided data from June and July. Bad weather caused a reduction in ASB seen on cameras. Scooters, E-Bikes, riding in the parks and town centre. Cannot identify the riders due to balaclavas etc. Public relied upon to provide a good description of the bikes and/or riders.

No major issues with any of our CCTV cameras.

Perennial issue of seasonal foliage of trees in Market Street – various trees have now been cropped which has improved CCTV coverage by at least 40%. Thanks to elected members who helped to drive this forward – your persistence has brought this result.

Re: the contract for maintenance of our CCTV cameras – new tender is out for the new maintenance contract district-wide. Reflecting the need for very quick and urgent repairs when needed.

Cllr. Harrison [on behalf of Cllr. Debbie Cartwright] extended the invitation for Duncan Rollo to visit The Lighthouse Community Café in Market Street Hednesford to discuss the issue of rough sleepers in the area. Duncan Rollo requested that she telephone him so they can have a conversation to see if there is anything he can support her with, rather than a physical meeting.

There was a spate of theft of high-end cars [car key burglaries] over the summer. The Community Safety Partnership has funded 200 Faraday pouches if HTC would like a quantity to offer to Hednesford residents he can arrange for that.

7. Cllr D Cartwright – Provision of HMO

Request for support for a local HMO bought forward from July Meeting

Proposed: Cllr Harrison proposed that HTC write a letter to CCDC supporting the provision of more HMO's in the district, to avoid sending homeless people to be housed out of the area.

Seconded : Cllr Pearson

Votes 6 for, 1 against, 2 abstain.

8. Nominated Charity for Community Events (B/f from September Meeting)

Councillors were reminded to each provide the names of two small local charities [a charity with a registered charity number, or a constituted community group with a bank account] for a nominated list to be prepared by our officers.

9. Finance

Noted: the formal completion of AGAR and Audit. Published on our website as required.

Noted: there were a couple of minor admin improvements requested.

All committees were reminded to consider and provide their budgetary requirements for April 2024 by 21st December 2023 - so at each upcoming committee meeting this will be on the agenda for discussion.

Action: All Committee Chairs

CIL – update from RFO regarding CIL spend and allocated spend together with the need to spend some of the CIL funds before the end of October 2023. This can be done as a costed 'commitment'. Councillors were requested to proactively seek projects to allocate these funds for. Officer capacity is limited so Councillors are asked to be proactive and try to obtain costings for potential spend so that this CIL is not lost.

Action: All

Cllr. Harrison reminded Council that we were awaiting costings for the proposed spend to assist with the refurbishment of the rear rooms at Hednesford Library. Chair invited Liz Williams to give an update [from the public gallery] – the Library Service Property Services are not progressing this. Needs chasing up. Cllr. Pearson will speak to Cllr. Phil Hewitt [Staffordshire County Councillor] to investigate how we might push this to be progressed. Liz will also chase again.

Action: Cllr Pearson

Cllr. Walker asked if it is possible to ask for an extension of time - Cllr. Pearson confirmed he will speak with Officers at CCDC to request an extension of the time limit to assist.

Action: Cllr Pearson

Payment to HIP for the Hednesford Christmas Event – RFO requested approval from Council;

Cllr Pearson **proposed** Council instruct RFO to raise this and send the funds as a matter of urgency.

Seconded: Cllr Ann Turville

Vote: 8 for; 1 abstain

10. Verbal update from Committee Chairs

Regeneration and Community Committee:

Cllr Jagger confirmed next meeting scheduled for 17th October

Planning Committee:

Cllr. Jagger was asked to give an update. Committee had met on 28th September. Confirmed reaffirmed Climate Emergency Declaration and handed out working draft of Local Action Plan for all Councillors to peruse and feedback suggestions for additions or amendments etc. Aiming to agree a completed Local Action Plan document by end of this year for full Council's approval and adoption by our Officers.

Cllr. Jagger and Cllr. Walker asked Council to agree the wording of the Vision statement at this stage.

Proposed: Cllr. Ron Turville proposed that HTC agree the wording for the "Vision" statement

Seconded: Cllr Sharon Jagger

Agreed - Unanimous - Council agrees the wording for the Vision statement of the proposed Local Action Plan.

Pye Green Community Centre:

Cllr Harrison gave a verbal update on roof repairs, decorating, Function Room floor, Implementation of new hire rates, implementation and agreement of terms and conditions; next meeting 21st November at 7pm

Finance, Personnel & Operations Committee:

Cllr. Jones had arrived at the meeting at 8.40 pm and confirmed the date of the next meeting 24th October at 7pm. He has more to bring to the private & confidential part of this meeting.

11. Community Consultation Summary

Community Officer provided infographic feedback document to all Councillors for perusal and gave a verbal update on the findings from the consultation.

12. Update from the Community Officer

Community Officer Matt Johnson provided a verbal update.

The Hub

Since launch on 11 September numbers have increased. On the 4th session on 4th October, we had 17 people attending. I'm very pleased and proud as to how this initiative has developed and clearly word is getting around the community about what we are offering.

Wellbeing Walk

The second walk took place this morning with 33 people attending. (5 x walkers are being trained as Walk Guides) This will help the Walk to be self-sustaining and add capacity for similar walking events operating out of Pye Green Community Centre.

Remembrance Event

Road Closure application in. Event Management Plan submitted. Lord Lieutenant invited and awaiting response. Invitations to individuals and community groups to go out shortly.

Councillors – volunteers required to help during the event – especially to escort Lord Lieutenant or representative if coming.

Trinity Church War Memorial

You will all now be aware that Trinity Church on Station Road has closed. The magnificent War Memorial that was located inside the Church has now been secured and found a new home at West Hill Primary School, Hednesford. My thanks go to Kelly Bracebridge, Head Teacher, for her kind cooperation in making this happen.

The memorial will form part of a joint community Remembrance project between HTC, West Hill School and SUA School that will come to fruition November 2024. The Memorial will be unveiled before Remembrance, and I have asked the Ward Councillor for West Hill and District Councillor if they would be available for this.

Community Support Grant

I am working to get this scheme running shortly with a call out for applications by the end of the month. We have budgeted for 10 grants of £500 each for community groups.

Cllr. Walker explained to the meeting that this Thursday and Friday there will be a mobile health check unit parked on site at PGCC for people to attend and have basic health checks [height, weight, BMI, blood sugar, cholesterol, heart-age etc]. No need to make an appointment, just turn up. Cllr. Jagger and Cllr. Walker will be present in the foyer of PGCC to support our staff on both days. This has been brought by use of CIL funds, agreed by Council at our recent EGM.

13. Hednesford Hopper Update

Cllr. Pearson read out the paragraph on the agenda and Cllr. Harrison proposed an amendment: the Hednesford Hopper service will run as stated from 1st October until the end of the funding. No seconder for the amendment for the posters and flyers requested.

14. Hednesford Street Market

RFO explained that after the October market the current provider cannot continue, but they have proposed a solution which could cover the November and December offer. This proposal will be discussed in private business as it is commercially sensitive.

Council is asked to consider options:

- (1) Cancel the market in its entirety.
- (2) Bring it back in-house [with the possible creation of new posts] or
- (3) Put the organising of a monthly market out to tender.

All agreed that the monthly market is an asset to the town and should continue. However, HTC officers are currently at more than full capacity and unable to organise the market in-house or even prepare a tender process. It was suggested that discussion of these three options be brought back to the table in the new year, as HTC staffing capacity needs addressing before anything else.

The October market will go ahead. There is a Christmas event being organised by HiP in December with community stalls and the town's Christmas lights will be switched on.

Cllr. Sheila Cartwright complained that a member of the public was filming. Cllr. Pearson said that permission to film should have been requested and that our Standing Orders need to be looked at seriously. Cllr. Sheila Cartright suggested closing the meeting.

Proposed: Cllr. Walker proposed that we put the discussion around the provision of the Market over to the New Year as suggested

Seconded: Cllr. Jagger

Vote: in agreement to postpone this discussion – **Unanimous.**

15. Private and Confidential

Matters discussed under private and confidential can be provided separately to Councillors if required.

14. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday 1st November 2023 – 7.00 pm

Pye Green Community Centre – Meeting Room 1

The meeting closed at 11.00 pm.

Signed:

Date: