

DOWNHAM MARKET TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD TUESDAY, 8TH APRIL 2008 AT 7.30PM

Present:	The Mayor	Cllr J W Doyle
	The Deputy Mayor	Cllr R Leach
	Councillors	S W Blyth
		W A Clark
		M G Ford
		J K Fox
		P E Freeman
		S F Geary
		J Groom
		Mrs G S S Purslow
		C Pyatt
		J J Reed
		Mrs P A Roberts
		C T Sampson
		Mrs P B Sharp
		A D Stacey
		V F Starling
	County Councillor	Mrs S E L Hutson
	Borough Councillors	J R Legg
		A M Lovett
	Town Clerk	Mrs J M Markwell
	Deputy Clerk	Mrs S D Porter
	Press Correspondent	Ms S Hewitt
	Norfolk County Council	Mr P Cudby
		Mr M Stringfellow
	Mott MacDonald	Mr S Barker

1224. To receive members Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Mrs S M Nunn (illness), Borough Cllr Mrs K Mellish and Inspector M Bates.

The apologies were accepted.

Cllr R J Keates and Cllr S C Teverson did not attend.

1225. Evacuation Procedures

The Mayor, Cllr Doyle, notified those present of the emergency evacuation procedure from the Town Council offices.

1226. To receive members Declarations of Interest

Cllr Sampson declared a prejudicial interest in Item 1233, to approve the Payment of Bills.

Proposed – The Mayor Cllr Doyle

‘To invoke Standing Order 17, in order to vary the order of business and allow the item regarding the bus stop in Bridge Street, to be discussed at this time.’

All in favour

The Mayor, Cllr Doyle, adjourned the meeting.

1227. To discuss the bus stop in Bridge Street, Cllr A D Stacey

Cllr Stacey reported that he had attended a meeting with Mr Cudby, Mr Stringfellow, Mr Barker and Mr Ben Coulsen from Norfolk Green on Friday, 14th March 2008 to discuss the relocation of the bus stop in Bridge Street.

At the meeting Cllr Stacey had asked Mr Coulsen to consider the possibility of having a bus stop at the end of the Hollies car park in order that buses could pull off the road to drop off and pick up passengers. This however had been refused because it would be impossible for buses coming through the Hollies car park to access that stop. It was also revealed that the public would not wish to be dropped off and picked up that far down Bridge Street.

Mr Barker, an architect for Mott MacDonald, circulated proposed plans to the Councillors. Mr Cudby, Norfolk County Council Transport Passenger Group, confirmed the following:

1. The existing bus stop is not DDA compliant.
2. When buses use the existing stop, major traffic delays are caused.
3. A bus stop is required between the Hollies car park and Barclays Bank to ensure all bus services are able to access it.
4. A bus stop would not be feasible opposite the Reeds store because a delivery lorry and bus stopping at the same time would cause major traffic congestion.
5. At present 3 buses an hour use the Bridge Street route but this is set to increase to 7 an hour.
6. The Town’s population is growing and the current bus stop would not be able to cater for the increase.

A long discussion took place. Concern was raised that the Barclays Bank Securicor van also caused problems when it made its collection.

Mr Cudby confirmed that he would be investigating the following matters:

1. Whether the taxi ranks could be reviewed and relocated by the BCKL&WN – a meeting was being held on Thursday, 10th April 2008 with the BCKL&WN Licensing Committee to discuss this matter. Initial enquiries have established that the taxi ranks could be relocated to Priory Road, although this will not be confirmed until October 2008 when the Cabinet will make a decision.
2. Whether Highways would be prepared to lose two on street parking spaces to make way for the new bus stop and allow buses to manoeuvre adequately.
3. Whether Barclays Bank would be able to implement a new practice for the Securicor van to stop in their car park.

Mr Cudby advised that because the original plans had been amended, a further consultation period would be required in order for neighbouring properties to make any comments.

The formal process would then commence to include a four-week public consultation period. Any objections received within this period would be assessed by the Legal Department. Providing this process ran effortlessly the new bus stop could be installed within six months.

The Mayor, Cllr Doyle, thanked Mr Cudby, Mr Stringfellow and Mr Barker for their presentation and resumed the meeting.

Proposed – Cllr Stacey

Seconded – Cllr Ford

‘That this Council asks Norfolk County Council to investigate this proposal further and to go ahead with the current scheme that has been discussed.’

For – 16

Against – 0

Abstention – 1

Mr Cudby, Mr Stringfellow and Mr Barker left the Council Chambers at 8.01pm.

Adjourn meeting for public participation and reports

The Mayor, Cllr Doyle, adjourned the meeting.

Police Report

A member of Norfolk Constabulary was not present at the meeting.

Public Participation

Cllr Pyatt advised that the width of the bridleway, near Hillcrest, appeared to be shrinking in size whenever Persimmon Homes carried out any work on it. Cllr Lovett confirmed that he would investigate this matter.

Cllr Mrs Sharp wished to note that Holly Landscapes were doing a brilliant job in keeping the Town clean and tidy.

County Councillor

Cllr Mrs Hutson reported that discussions regarding Unitary Status were ongoing.

Borough Councillor

Cllr Legg had nothing to report.

Cllr Lovett reported that he would be attending the meeting on Thursday, 10th April 2008 at 2.00pm to discuss the possible transfer of the taxi ranks and consider Norfolk County Council’s transport issues regarding the relocation of the bus stop in Bridge Street. The Mayor, Cllr Doyle, agreed to attend the meeting on behalf of the Town Council.

The Mayor, Cllr Doyle, resumed the meeting.

1228. To approve the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 12th February 2008 (pages 2357-2363) were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

Cllr Mrs Roberts noted that due to staff sickness and holiday leave the minutes of the Full Council meeting held in March were not yet available.

1229. To receive Correspondence

A list of correspondence had been circulated (Appendix 1).

Cllr Sampson reported that a letter had been received from Mr Firrell regarding Post Office closures. Councillors were asked to read the excellent content of his letter.

1230. Councillor's Questions

Cllr Starling reported that, for a number of reasons, the Music Festival, which had been planned for Saturday, 19th July 2008, would now not be taking place.

1231. To Adopt the Standing Committee Minutes

Planning and Environmental Committee

Cllr Fox noted that the Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 6th February 2008 (pages 2353-2356) had previously been adopted at the Full Council meeting on Tuesday, 11th March 2008.

Proposed – Cllr Fox

Seconded – Cllr Mrs Sharp

‘That the minutes of the Planning and Environmental Committee meeting of Tuesday, 19th February 2008 (pages 2364-2372) be adopted.’

All in favour

1232. To receive the Clerk's Report

The Clerk's report had been circulated (Appendix 2).

Not on agenda

The Clerk advised that a meeting was being held on Wednesday, 9th April 2008 at 6.00pm in the Town Hall, King's Lynn, regarding an update on the Local Government Review. The Clerk and Cllr Sampson would be attending. Any other interested Councillors were asked to inform the Clerk whether they also wished to go.

The Clerk informed Councillors that the Community Development Officer had given birth to twins on 15th March 2008; Harry and Olivia. The Clerk would send her a card on behalf of the Council.

1233. To approve the Payment of Bills

A list of bills had been circulated (Appendix 3).

Cllr Sampson had declared a prejudicial interest in this item.

Proposed – Cllr Mrs Roberts

Seconded – Cllr Stacey

‘That the bills be paid as per the attached list.’

For – 16

Against – 0

Abstention – 1 (Declared Interest)

1234. Town Hall

a. To discuss funding consultant

Cllr Ford reported that he, the Mayor, Cllr Doyle, Cllr Fox and the Clerk had met with Mr Bob Turner on Friday, 28th March 2008 to negotiate a consultancy arrangement with him. Short, medium and long term projects were discussed, the early priorities being the Water Festival, Town Hall, Howdale Community Centre, Heritage Centre, additional outreach Youth Work time and a youth venue etc.

The meeting resolved that the services of Mr Turner should be on a self employed basis for a minimum period of 6 months initially, with the possibility of an extension if both parties were satisfied with the success of this collaboration. A monthly meeting would be held to ascertain Mr Turner’s progress and more frequently when project developments demanded so.

Mr Turner would require £4,000 for a period of 6 months working a minimum of 10 hours per week. He would be prepared to accept a contract for 3 months but it would be unrealistic to expect anyone to draw down any large sum of money in less than 6-12 months and even longer if negotiating with National Lottery, Heritage Funds, EEDA etc.

Financial Standing Order 11c states, ‘When applications are made to waiver financial regulations relating to contracts to enable a price to be negotiated without competition the reason shall be embodied in a recommendation to the Council.’

The group that met with Mr Turner would like Council to consider agreement to meeting the cost of consultancy for a period of 6 months initially, at a cost of £4,000, plus mileage expenses. Those who met with Mr Turner felt there was good reason not to place this contract out to tender on the following grounds:

- a. The need for additional funds for a variety of projects is becoming evermore urgent.
- b. Such additional funds raised would take pressure off other Council Committee budget heads.
- c. The Council has worked with Mr Turner in the past and his record at drawing down funds is well known.
- d. It would be expected that any funding bids after the initial 6-month period would become self funding, in that a management fee could be built into the larger funding bids.
- e. In the first 6 months any monies raised for projects, for example, the Water Festival, would release Development Committee funds already allocated to such projects.

Proposed – Cllr Ford

Seconded – Cllr Groom

‘That this Council agrees to waive the need to place this consultancy bid out to tender; Financial Standing Order 11c allows for this variation, and that the Council enters into

an initial 6-month agreement with Mr Turner at a cost of £4,000, to be reviewed at 5 months and referred back to Full Council for any additional consultancy work.'

All in favour

b. To discuss future plans for the Town Hall

The Town Hall Working Party established that over the next few months, and until firm decisions have been made regarding the future management structure of the Town Hall, issues may arise that staff would need to refer for urgent resolution. The Working Party therefore respectfully suggested that since its members represent a cross section of all Standing Committees, this group would be best placed to provide the necessary support in the short term.

Proposed – Cllr Ford

Seconded – Cllr Mrs Sharp

'That the current Town Hall Working Party title be changed to that of Interim Town Hall Management Team, with the authority to make decisions in the best interests of promoting both best practice for the staff and of developing the Town Hall functions.'

All in favour

Cllr Ford reported that the Interim Town Hall Management Team would be meeting on a weekly basis.

The Civic Trust document had not yet been received and the Clerk was pursuing this. Once received, a Feasibility Study would be put out to tender. It would be anticipated that Mr Turner could obtain funding to draw down money to pay for the cost of the study.

The Mayor, Cllr Doyle, congratulated Cllr Ford for managing the Town Hall project and getting it transferred back into the ownership of the Town Council.

Cllr Stacey reported that the Festival Committee had written to request the booking of the Town Hall for its monthly meetings up to and including the 2009 Festival, and for Festival Week from Sunday, 4th May 2008 through to Sunday, 11th May 2008. The BCKL&WN had always permitted the Committee to use the Town Hall free of charge and it was hoped the Town Council would continue this.

Cllr Fox declared a prejudicial interest in this matter. Cllr Fox was invited not to leave the meeting in the case he may be required to answer any questions regarding this matter.

Councillors agreed that because the Town Council had agreed to manage the Town Hall in exactly the same way the BCKL&WN did, this would be acceptable. It was noted that the Town Council provided an annual grant of £5,000 to the Festival Committee and this would be reviewed in 2009 to take into effect the concessionary use of the Town Hall.

1235. Update on the construction of the Fire Station Car Park – Report from Cllr Fox

Cllr Fox reported that the retaining wall in the old fire station site had been built and was of excellent quality. Work had temporarily stopped on site but would recommence on Monday, 21st April 2008.

1236. Report on the Howdale Community Centre – Report from Cllr Pyatt

Cllr Pyatt had nothing to report to this meeting.

1237. To discuss CCTV – Report from Cllr Mrs Sharp

Cllr Mrs Sharp reported that Mr Karl Weeks was currently investigating an alternative site for the hub, which had originally been proposed to be outside the Town Hall. Mr Weeks would be meeting with BT to discuss this matter.

1238. An update on Car Park charging consultations

Cllr Stacey advised that the Car Park Charges Working Party would be meeting to discuss car park charging and would make a recommendation to the Car Parks and Highways Committee.

1239. To discuss matters arising from the Town Meeting

Details of the matters raised at the Annual Town Meeting had been provided in the Clerk's Report.

Concern over some old/listed walls in the town that are not being maintained
The Clerk had reported this item to Mr John Selby, Conservation Officer.

1240. To discuss Town Council policy on current Post Office closures

Cllr Sampson reported that a meeting had been held in the Town Hall on Monday, 7th April 2008 regarding local Post Office closures. Two Post Offices within Downham Market had been nominated for closure; the one at the Railway Station and the one in Lynn Road. Post Offices were part of the community and with increased residential development taking place in Downham Market the need to keep them open was essential. All Councillors were invited to write individual letters but a formal letter from the Town Council would be crucial in the campaign to save any closures.

Cllr Leach noted that when he and Cllr Mrs Sharp had attended the meeting in Aylsham regarding Post Office closures the speaker had been adamant that if a Post Office were saved, another would be closed in its place. At the meeting in the Town Hall yesterday it was confirmed that if a good case was put forward to save a Post Office, another may not need to be closed instead.

Proposed – Cllr Sampson

Seconded – Cllr Leach

‘That the Council supports the retention of the two sub Post Offices and the main Post Office in Downham Market and writes a letter to the Post Office to this effect.’

All in favour

Cllr Fox noted that the Railway Road Post Office would eventually support the proposed large developments taking place in Railway Road and Bennett Street, and the Lynn Road Post Office would sustain the proposed massive development in Downham Market North. If these sub offices were closed it would have a huge impact on the remaining Post Office. It was also

highlighted that both Post Offices were located within a shop and this was a main criteria of the Post Office to sustain them.

It was noted that both Post Masters had expressed their wish to remain open; Cllr Mrs Sharp had spoken to the Railway Road Post Master and Cllr Leach had liaised with the one in Lynn Road.

1241. To discuss Town Council policy on speciality markets being held in the Town

Cllr Leach reported that the French market had been invited to Downham Market approximately 3 years ago; this had been done in consultation with the Chamber of Trade, the usual market traders, and local businesses. Due to its success they have returned each year, and further speciality markets have started to trade, including the Italian market.

The speciality markets make a lot of money, they are extremely popular with the public, and the Town Council receives an income from them of approximately £1,000 per annum.

Both the French and Italian markets have expressed an interest to come to Downham Market twice a year. The French market is very big and the Town Hall car park would need to be closed. Because the Italian market is smaller it is able to stand on half the Town Hall car park, which therefore enables some parking spaces to remain. A German market would be a similar size to the Italian one.

A small discussion took place and it was noted that because the markets come on a Thursday, the loss of parking spaces was not too much of a major concern. It was agreed that as a market town, Downham Market should be seen to encourage speciality markets. As the Town Council now owned the Town Hall, the front and rear doors could be opened as a walkway through to the Town Square, which would warrant the markets to stand on both sides.

Proposed – Cllr Leach

Seconded – Cllr Groom

‘That the Council maintains the use of and encourages speciality markets in the Town, and the Markets Working Party monitors the situation.’

For – 13

Against – 1

Abstention – 3 (Declared Interest)

1242. To discuss any urgent items as agreed by the Mayor

There were no urgent items to discuss.

1243. Mayor’s Announcements

- a. St George’s Day Events – Wednesday, 23rd April 2008 through to Saturday, 26th April 2008.
- b. Civic Service – St Edmund’s Church, Sunday, 13th April 2008 at 3.00pm.

Proposed – The Mayor Cllr Doyle

Seconded – Cllr Leach

‘To invoke Standing Order 5a, that in the view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest, that the public and/or the press be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.’

All in favour

Ms Hewitt left the Council Chambers at 8.52pm.

1244. Human Resources report (confidential item)

See Confidential Report.

The Mayor, Cllr Doyle, closed confidentiality and resumed the meeting.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.58pm.

Chairman

Date