

**DOWNHAM MARKET TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

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**MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING**

**HELD THURSDAY, 14<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2006 AT 7.30PM**

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Present:	The Mayor	Cllr M G Ford
	The Deputy Mayor	Cllr J W Doyle
	Councillors	R J R Baker
		R M Bodle

J K Fox

P E Freeman

J Groom

R Leach

Mrs S M Nunn

S W Nunn

C Pyatt

J J Reed

Mrs P A Roberts

C T Sampson

P B Sharp

A D Stacey

V F Starling

S C Teverson

Town Clerk	Mrs J M Markwell
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Deputy Clerk	Mrs S D Porter
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**943. To receive members Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Cllr C D Bond (work commitment).

The apologies were accepted.

**944. To receive members Declarations of Interest**

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, reminded Councillors that it was the responsibility of each individual Councillor to declare a personal or prejudicial interest at meetings. Fellow Councillors can only recommend that an interest is declared but cannot dictate to do so. Councillors who declare a personal interest can take part in a meeting and vote on the matter.

There were no declarations of interest.

**945. To discuss the siting of the fair in Downham Market in March 2007 due to the requisition in writing from at least five members of the Council, "That the decision to hold a fair on the Hollies Car Park in 2007 should be reversed and that an alternative location should be negotiated." This is in accordance with Standing orders 11c and 26a**

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, read the proposal made at the last Full Council meeting:

‘That the St Winnold Fair is held next year in the week commencing Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2007, with the Civic Breakfast on Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007 and The Showmen’s Guild Fair on the Hollies car park.’

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, advised that this meeting would be to discuss the siting of the fair only. The part of the resolution with regard to the Civic Breakfast being held on Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007 would still stand.

Cllr Mrs Roberts enquired which Councillors had written to the Mayor to call this meeting. The Clerk reported Cllrs Baker, Bond, Fox, Freeman, Leach, Pyatt and Starling.

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, invited Councillors to debate their views and there followed a long discussion. The following comments were made by Councillors:

– The St Winnold’s Civic Breakfast is an excellent event and should not be coupled with the fair. The local businesses are extremely angry that the Council agreed to site the fair in the Hollies car park. Last year the fair took up the majority of the car park and there were very few spaces left to park, when it should only have taken up half the car park. The fair organisers are respectable people and there is no bitterness towards them, but if they are left unsupervised when setting up, an extended layout is inevitable.

– Cllr Reed is supported for his enthusiasm for urging a fair to visit Downham Market as it has done so in the past. Since becoming Chairman of the Car Parks and Highways Committee the implications of siting the fair in the Hollies car park have been brought to light, particularly at the last Committee meeting where traders attended and various objection letters had been received. In 2007 it is likely that the Iceland car park will be lost but it is unlikely that the fire station site will be ready to unburden this loss. NCC Highways has also proposed that a number of on-street parking spaces are removed in order to make way for a new taxi rank. When this is added up, together with the loss of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the Hollies car park it does not seem unreasonable that the fair should stand on a more suitable site elsewhere and it is possible that the Showmen’s Guild may be flexible for this particular year. In 2008 and thereafter, parking problems may not be such an issue and this topic can be re-visited at that time.

– Prior to set up the fair has always confirmed where their rides and stalls would be sited on the Hollies car park by marking them out on the ground. This has then been agreed and approved by the Working Party.

– Adding to the loss of parking highlighted by Cllr Stacey, the Town Hall car park is also inoperative on Fridays and Saturdays when the markets are held. There is no objection to the fair coming to Downham Market, but it should not be sited on the Hollies car park. Sympathy for the local businesses must be shown and it is fair to say that more people use the shops than they do the fair. Many other fairs in the country are sited on fields and if they wish to come, they should be flexible as to where they go.

– The Howdale would be an ideal site, which is still within the heart of the Town.

– At the King's Lynn Mart a calendar was presented which displayed an equal split of fairs sited on both hard and soft ground. The fair has always been fully supported in previous years but parking in 2007 will be particularly disrupted in light of the exceptional circumstances taking place and the site for it must be reconsidered.

– The fair is supported but the Town Council should not be dictated to by the fair people where it goes. The fair has been offered the Howdale on many occasions but it has always been refused.

– During Festival Week a small fair stands on the Howdale. Half the fairs in Great Britain stand on fields. The Chamber of Trade is in favour of a visiting fair, but is strongly opposed to it being on the Hollies car park.

– The fair has historically been sited within the centre of the Town which is the reason it should be sited on the Hollies car park. Some years ago Ray Harding, BCKL&WN, advised that the promotion of Towns came through three phases; grants to make buildings look nicer, which has been done, town centre enhancements, which has been done, and the promotion of towns through fairs, markets and other events. A fair makes the Town active, vibrant and alive.

– The Car Parks and Highways Committee is looking closely at ways to improve future car parking issues.

– The Town Council can be proud of its achievements within the past few years for providing nearly 50% more car parking spaces, namely the Paradise Road extension car park, consultations with Highways which helped to provide more on-street parking spaces, and the purchase of the fire station site.

– The fair was originally asked to visit Downham Market to coincide with the St Winnold's Civic Breakfast. The London Borough of Merton closed their High Street completely for a fair and their Chamber of Trade was fully supportive of this. Some businesses, which can be substantiated, have confirmed that they do not object to the fair. Some traders which are opposed to the fair have stated that their business turnover fell by a ¼ during the fair week in 2006, although there is no accounting evidence to support their claims. The fair has been asked to stand on the Howdale but has refused to do so. Since the last Full Council meeting a confirmation letter had been sent to the Showmen's Guild to advise that the Council agreed to site the fair on the Hollies car park in March 2007. If the original proposal is rescinded at tonight's meeting the Clerk would need to advise the fair organisers accordingly.

– It is not only local businesses that object to the fair, but local residents have also expressed their resentment to the loss of car parking spaces.

– The Town seemed to be a ghost town in 2006 during the week when the fair was present as people had avoided visiting for this reason.

– The proprietor of Reeds Homestore sent an objection letter which stated that their business turnover had been adversely affected when the fair was present last year. The London Borough of Merton cannot be compared to Downham Market.

– It does seem unjust that businesses declare their turnover is affected when the fair is in Town, when it is possible that when the fair has gone, visitors come to Downham Market because they have heard the Town is vibrant. However, 2007 will not be a normal year and there will be a proportionate impact on parking.

– The Memorial Playing Field could also be considered to site the fair.

– The letter from Reeds Homestore advises that the Council is being criminally negligent in allowing the Wilkinson development to take place. This is untrue. The Council had attended meetings with the developer to try and save car parking spaces but this was vetoed by another resource.

– Confirmation has been received today to advise that a large development on the High Street will be built in 2007 and the works will be for the duration of 70 weeks. It is likely the contractors will park their vehicles on the car parks, resulting in a loss of even more spaces.

– The fair may be able to go on the fire station site.

– The fire station site had already been investigated but in view of its size and trip factors, would not be a suitable location.

**Proposed – Cllr Fox**

**Seconded – Cllr Mrs Nunn**

**‘That the decision to hold a fair on the Hollies Car Park in 2007 should be reversed and that an alternative location should be negotiated. This is in accordance with Standing orders 11c and 26a.’**

**For – 15 Against – 2 Abstention – 0**

It was agreed that the St Winnold’s Breakfast Working Party would investigate an alternative site for the fair. It was also suggested that a circus could instead take place during the St Winnold’s Breakfast week. This would be explored and a report made to Full Council.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.19pm.