

DOWNHAM MARKET TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

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MINUTES OF MEETING HELD TUESDAY, 10TH APRIL 2007 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 MBE
		R M Bodle
		C D Bond
		K I Byron
		J K Fox
		P E Freeman
		R Leach
		Mrs S M Nunn
		C T Sampson
		P B Sharp
		A D Stacey
		V F Starling
		S C Teverson
	Borough Councillors	J R Legg
		Mrs K Mellish
	County Councillor	Mrs S E L Hutson
	Town Clerk	Mrs J M Markwell
	Deputy Clerk	Mrs S D Porter
	Press Correspondent	Ms S Hewitt

1011. To receive members Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs J Groom (holiday), S W Nunn (holiday), C Pyatt (prior engagement) and Mrs P A Roberts (holiday). Cllr J J Reed did not attend.

The apologies were accepted.

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, congratulated and thanked Cllr Baker for serving the Town Council for the past 32 years. Members gave Cllr Baker a round of applause.

1012. Evacuation Procedures

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

1013. To receive members Declarations of Interest

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, and Cllrs Doyle and Stacey declared a prejudicial interest in Item 1019, To approve the Payment of Bills.

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, adjourned the meeting for public participation and reports.

Public Participation

No members of public were present at the meeting.

Borough Councillor Report and Questions

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Cllr Mrs Mellish reported:

- The carrstone wall of Cannon Tyres facing Church Road has a swarm of bees in it; this has been reported to Environmental Services.
- It was with regret that only 14 people had stood for Town Council and no new people had opted to be elected.

Cllr Fox wished to note that the bees in the wall of Cannon Tyres were protected masonry bees and had been there for approximately four years.

Cllr Fox advised that a vast number of other large parishes throughout the Borough had also not had full numbers of elected members.

Cllr Teverson arrived at the meeting at 7.35pm.

Cllr Bodle noted that 15 Borough Councillor seats would not be contested in the May elections and in view of this should a number of events across the Borough be held in the next six months leading up to Democracy Week to encourage citizens to stand for Council. This was noted.

County Councillor Report

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Cllr Mrs Hutson reported:

- The Norwich City Council's Unitary Bid had gone through to the next round. Although Central Government had advised that only eight councils would go through they increased this figure to sixteen on the closing day. Norwich came fifteenth out of the sixteen contenders. It was hopeful therefore that Norwich would not be successful in the next round. If it were

successful the cost to the county for loss of economies of scale was estimated at £6.5m per annum plus £1.9m for splitting the Fire Service. The investigation regarding splitting services has already cost the county in the region of £100m.

- Residents of Bexwell Road had asked Town Councillors to investigate various concerns which were really Highways matters and Cllr Mrs Hutson advised that it would be helpful if such matters were passed on to her so she was aware. She had managed to resolve the matter of school traffic driving on to the lay-by grass and the widening of the entrance, and was discussing the idea of making the lay-by one-way with Highways and local residents.
- The Borough Council would be placing a 'No Access' sign in Rabbit Lane to stop vehicles driving through to the Retreat Estate.

Cllr Doyle advised that the Norfolk Green bus service now ceased at 5.00pm on weekdays and Saturdays and did not run at all on Sundays. Cllr Mrs Hutson confirmed that the bus services were a huge cost to the County and as buses were hardly used, cuts to services had recently been made.

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, resumed the meeting.

1014. To approve the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

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It was noted that an amendment should be made to page 2086 under the Norfolk Constabulary Report where line 1 should read:

'Inspector Bates then gave a short presentation on the Safer Neighbourhood Teams which will...'

The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday, 13th March 2007 (pages 2084-2092) were approved and signed as a true and accurate record with the above amendment.

1015. To receive Correspondence

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

The Clerk reminded Councillors that the next Safer Neighbourhoods and Community Action Group meeting would be at the Fire Station on Friday, 18th May 2007 at 7.00pm.

1016. Councillor's Questions

Q: There may be a harmful impact on the wildlife within the Willows Nature Reserve when the proposed development takes place. Can this Council write to the BCKL&WN Planning Department to request that an independent survey of the flora and fauna is carried out at the Willows Nature Reserve, preferably by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust or similar high standing expert organisation? Not only would this be a useful guide to determine the species there at present, and indicate any measures needed to protect the area, but would also be a reference point in the future to judge the impact the development planned to surround the site will have had.

A: Cllr Doyle would draft a letter.

1017. To Adopt the Standing Committee Minutes

Planning and Environmental Committee

Proposed – Cllr Fox

Seconded – Cllr Sampson

‘That the minutes of the Planning and Environmental Committee meeting of Tuesday, 20th February 2007 (pages 2072-2078) be adopted.’

All in favour

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 14th March 2007 had not yet been circulated to members.

Proposed – Cllr Sampson

Seconded – Cllr Baker

‘That the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting of Tuesday, 27th February 2007 (pages 2079-2083) be adopted.’

All in favour

1018. To receive the Clerk’s Report

The Clerks Report had been circulated (Appendix 2).

Not on Agenda

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Cllr John Dobson, Leader of the BCKLWN

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, wished to note that Cllr Dobson, Leader of the BCKL&WN, had been extremely helpful, positive and cooperative with the Town Council. It was agreed to send him a letter wishing him well for the future. The Mayor, Cllr Ford, would draft a letter.

Forthcoming Elections

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, noted that the Council would not be able to proceed with Quality Status at this time as there had only been 70% elected members. In order to achieve Quality Status there would have to be 80% elected members.

Cllr Fox noted that this would be a good opportunity to ask the BCKL&WN to consider reducing the numbers of members on this Council. Cllr Teverson advised that the guidelines adopted in the Borough of West Norfolk for

calculating how many members should be on a Parish/Town Council was 1 elected Councillor per 750 electors.

This item would be added to the next Full Council agenda for further discussion.

1019. To approve the Payment of Bills

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

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, and Cllrs Doyle and Stacey had declared a prejudicial interest in this item.

Proposed – Cllr Sampson Seconded – Cllr Mrs Nunn

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

For – 12 Against – 0 Abstentions – 3 (Declared Interests)

1020. Update on the acquisition of the Town Hall

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, reported that the Working Party was awaiting confirmation from Mr Matthew Henry to hold a meeting and clarify the Heads of Terms.

At the Town Meeting a survey had been held asking attendees to indicate whether they would want the Town Hall to be transferred back to the Town Council or kept by the BCKL&WN. One member of public indicated that they would want the Town Hall to remain under the control of the BCKL&WN and all the others had signed in favour of the transfer. This was a good indication that electors would want the Town Council to run it.

Cllr Bodle advised that full public consultation should be incorporated into the final decision of taking on the Town Hall. This was noted.

1021. Update on purchase of the Fire Station site, Priory Road, Downham Market

Cllr Fox advised that all details were in the Clerk's Report. There was nothing further to add.

1022. Report from Car Parks Review Working Party

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Cllr Stacey reported that work on the Hollies Car Park access road would be carried out on Tuesday, 17th and Wednesday, 18th April 2007. This would include the resurfacing of the access road, removal of the large hump at the Paradise Road end and a coloured assisted pedestrian walkway in its place.

Cllr Stacey also advised that a Working Party of the Car Parks and Highways Committee had carried out a Street Light Survey. The report had been circulated (Appendix 4). The survey would be referred to the Car Parks and Highways Committee.

Cllr Mrs Nunn advised that the base of the lights in the Hollies Car Park had weeds growing around them and should be tidied up. This would be investigated by the Clerk.

Cllr Sampson suggested that the BCKL&WN and NCC should investigate which lamps they own and maintain.

Cllr Mrs Hutson advised that the County Council were investigating the possibility of replacing some of their lights in the county for design continuity and environmental reasons.

1023. Report on Anglia in Bloom

Cllr Doyle reported that the Downham Country Garden Store had offered £100 worth of prizes for the best kept garden competition and entries were beginning to be received by BCKL&WN. The closing date for entries was Wednesday, 30th May 2007. Tesco Stores had confirmed that the green area near their car park did not belong to them and appeared to be the responsibility of the BCKL&WN. This area would now be tidied up. Investigations were under way to find out if any of the trees on the Memorial Playing Field were originally planted as memorials. The idea is to replace the avenue of trees with new ones.

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, advised that the large tree in the Memorial Playing Field had still not been replaced, although it was reported that it had arrived in King's Lynn. Cllr Mrs Mellish would pursue this.

1024. Feedback from the Town Meeting

Cllr Bodle felt that the informal and formal meeting worked well as a whole. However, the information provided to the townspeople should be more detailed, particularly the financial statistics. The administration costs, for example, which are a large proportion of the taxpayer's money, should be subdivided.

Cllr Mrs Nunn felt that the informal part of the meeting was too long for the small numbers of attendees and the formal meeting seemed to be a little uneventful.

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, advised that the informal meeting was invaluable; some residents had asked pertinent questions during this session which had eradicated their irritations prior to the formal meeting.

Cllr Stacey advised that he had received a lot of support from residents regarding the plans for the old Fire Station site and the informal session had therefore been beneficial in respect of this.

1025. To discuss the upgrading of the area surrounding the War Memorial

Cllr Doyle reported that during consultations with the Royal British Legion it had come to light that a major water leak had affected the war memorial area some years ago when a considerable quantity of sand and earth had been washed away from under the memorial area due to a burst water main. Because of this a structural survey would be carried out prior to the remodelling of the area to see if any damage was done.

Cllr Fox noted that there could be a drain blockage in Howdale Road because heavy rainfall does not appear to soak the water away as it used to, and therefore heads down onto Church Road and Priory Road. Cllr Teverson advised that the new development at the end of Howdale Road may cause more flooding as these areas are now concrete and cannot drain the water.

The Clerk noted that a few years ago Anglian Water had denied all knowledge of the burst water main when an enquiry was made regarding this.

The Community Development Officer had made preliminary investigations for a structural survey to be carried out and would pursue definite quotations. Members advised that the surveyor should be made aware of the concerns regarding the previous problems with the waterway channels underground which may have affected this area.

Proposed – Cllr Doyle Seconded – Cllr Fox

‘That this Council spends up to £1000.00 for a structural survey to be carried out on the War Memorial area.’

All in favour

The Clerk showed members a copy of a design plan; this had been the Working Party and the Royal British Legion's preferred design, although this had only been agreed in principle. Cllr Doyle advised that the ownership of the wall was not known and could therefore not form part of the plan for restoration.

Proposed – The Mayor Cllr Ford

‘To invoke Standing Order 17, in order to vary the order of business and allow the Mayor’s Announcements to be discussed prior to the confidential items on the agenda.’

All in favour

Proposed – The Mayor Cllr Ford Seconded – Cllr Doyle

‘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 8.36pm. Cllrs Mrs Hutson, Legg and Mellish were invited to remain.

1026. Report from Cllr Pyatt on the Howdale Community Centre

See Confidential Report.

1027. Human Resources report (confidential item)

There was nothing to report at this meeting.

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

The Mayor, Cllr Ford, reported that Cllrs Bodle, Bond and Byron would be standing down from the Council in May 2007 and thanked them for their contribution as Councillors.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.04pm.