

HORWICH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held in the Council Chamber, Public Hall, Lee Lane, Horwich on Monday 13 September 2021 commencing at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: M. Brady (in the Chair) I. Aldcroft, J. Bostocksmith, S. Burke, S. Chadwick, A. Coward, D. Grant, S. Rock, C. Rotheram, S. Williamson, P. Wright.
C. Hutchinson, Town Clerk.
1 member of the public.

A minute's silence was held in memory of Mrs Joyce Kellett, former Town Mayor of Horwich, Town Councillor and Borough Councillor who passed away recently.

CHAIR TO OUTLINE FIRE SAFETY EVACUATION PROCEDURE:

FG 7312 Councillor Brady outlined the procedure from the information provided.

TO SUBMIT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ACCEPT THE REASONS:

FG 7313 Apologies were accepted from Councillors Baines, Denton, Rock and Stone.

TO REMIND MEMBERS TO MAKE A DECLARATION CONCERNING ANY MATTERS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING THE MEETING OF WHICH THEY HAVE AN INTEREST:

FG 7314 None.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT MAY PUT QUESTIONS OR MAKE OBSERVATIONS REGARDING MATTERS IN RELATION TO WHICH THE TOWN COUNCIL HAS POWERS OR DUTIES OR WHICH AFFECT THE PARISH. MAXIMUM PERIOD 15 MINUTES:

FG 7315 None.

TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 AUGUST 2021:

FG 7316 Resolved to approve the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 8 August 2021.

TO APPROVE THE STATEMENT OF QUARTERLY ACCOUNTS TO THE PERIOD ENDING 30 JUNE 2021:

FG 7317 Resolved to approve the statement of quarterly accounts to the period ending 30 June 2021.

TO APPROVE THE QUARTERLY REPORT FROM INTERNAL AUDIT TO THE PERIOD ENDING 30 JUNE 2021:

FG 7318 Resolved to approve quarterly report from internal audit to the period ending 30 June 2021.

TO CONSIDER A REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF £1,500 FROM HORWICH HERITAGE FROM THE SPORT, SOCIAL AND CULTURE BUDGET:

FG 7319 It was agreed that Council should continue its support for Horwich Heritage as the organisation was a great asset to the community.

Resolved to approve a request for financial support of £1,500 from Horwich

Heritage from the Sport, Social and Culture budget for 2021 - 2022.

TO CONSIDER A PROPOSAL FOR THE ILLUMINATION OF RIVINGTON PIKE WITH A RED POPPY ON THE EVENINGS OF SATURDAY 13TH, SUNDAY 14TH AND THURSDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2021, WITH A REQUEST TO BOTH CHORLEY AND BLACKROD COUNCILS TO SHARE FINANCIAL SUPPORT WITH HORWICH TOWN COUNCIL FOR THIS EVENT BY CONTRIBUTING ONE THIRD EACH (£366.66).

FG 7320 Members were informed by the Town Clerk that Chorley Council had agreed to share the cost of this event. Councillor Grant informed Members that Blackrod Town Council had voted against the proposal based on a political decision regarding issues with town centre regeneration and that he had written to it in his capacity as a Ward Councillor, expressing his disappointment and asking it to reconsider its position and was awaiting a response.

Resolved to approve the proposal for the illumination of Rivington Pike with a red poppy on the evenings of Saturday 13th, Sunday 14th and Thursday 11th November 2021, with a request to both Chorley and Blackrod Councils to share financial support with Horwich Town Council for this event by contributing a third each (£366.66), with a proviso to proceed accordingly once a response had been received from Blackrod and, if necessary to ask the Town Clerk to contact Chorley Council again to ask if it would be prepared to increase its contribution to a half share of the cost of this event.

Councillor Rotheram agreed to contact CDS to ensure that a provisional booking had been made for this event.

TO CONSIDER A PROPOSAL FROM COUNCILLOR STONE THAT HORWICH TOWN COUNCIL CONTINUE THE 'HORWICH COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS' INITIATIVE TO RECOGNISE THE EFFORTS OF MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY ON AN ANNUAL BASIS:

FG 7321 It was agreed that in principle this was an excellent initiative and that going forward the process should be more selective, previous recipients will not be eligible and to include a category for younger people to tie-in with a previous resolution that the Council has a 'Young Citizen' award.

Resolved to approve the proposal that Horwich Town Council continues the 'Horwich Community Champions' initiative to recognise the voluntary efforts of members of the local community on an annual basis, and to include a category for younger people, with nominations to be considered by the either the Grants Sub or the Civic Awards Sub Committees, subject to time constraints, with recommendations brought to full Council for approval.

TO CONSIDER A PROPOSAL FROM COUNCILLOR CHADWICK THAT HORWICH TOWN COUNCIL APPROVES ALLOCATION OF UP TO A MAXIMUM OF £8,000 FOR THE PURCHASE OF LAND AT 244 CHORLEY NEW ROAD, HORWICH AND UP TO A MAXIMUM OF £2,000 FOR ASSOCIATED LEGAL COSTS FROM THE REGENERATION BUDGET FOR 2021 – 2022, ALONG WITH CONSIDERATION OF OPTIONS FOR FUTURE MAINTENANCE AND ANY OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS:

FG 7322 Councillor Chadwick informed Members that he would like to see Horwich Town Council purchase this small area of land which was being disposed of by Bolton Council. Although mindful of costs and the fact that the land had not been

maintained for a long time he believed that community groups could get involved and saw this as part of the vision of Friends of Horwich Green Spaces and a project that the Town Council could undertake to show that it was progressive and to prevent the land being bought by developers and built on and that it was the only place to have a rest on Chorley New Road until Queens Park. While recognising that there were some issues with anti-social behaviour in the evenings, the Town Council could get involved and organise community days and there could possible involvement in the future should the Town Council decide to employ a streetcleaner or lenthsmen. Until then the Council would have to rely on the involvement of community groups and Councillor Chadwick confirmed that he would be prepared to arrange this. He was aware that the Council has limited funds and that it was important to set a budget and that £8 - £10k was a sensible limit, with the land being sold at auction. It was expected that there would be minimum maintenance costs other than an initial investment in gardening tools and ongoing costs of buying plants, and pointed out that like the flower troughs will require somebody to maintain them. In response to a query regarding the condition of the wooden benches, Councillor Chadwick confirmed that he would be prepared to paint them as a temporary measure although they would require replacing at some point in the future.

Councillor Brady informed Members that she had contacted Ian Coulson at Bolton Council and that the land is listed to go into the November auction, with a sum of £10k mentioned, but obviously guide prices at auction may change, depending on interest and to encourage investment. The decision was taken to go to auction following the results of public consultation as there had been no objections from either Ward Councillors or members of the public, however Members should be aware there is no guarantee that the price could go as low as £10k and could go higher as Bolton Council is under an obligation to obtain the best price for its assets.

Councillor Chadwick stated the opinion that it was a nominal amount and part of wider campaign to protect green spaces and he would have preferred an increased budget of £2k but it was pointed out that the amounts specified made provision for legal costs and commission and was what Council was being asked to consider.

In response to a query about the process of lodging a bid at auction, it was suggested that it would either have to be done by the Clerk or the Chair of the Council. It was confirmed that the auction process would be online and would have to be set up for someone to make bids on behalf of the Council, however there was some uncertainty about the process.

There was some concern expressed as to although the Town Council could buy the land, whether or not it should actually be doing so. It was pointed out that the land had been badly neglected for a long time until the local clean up brigade went in and there had been no representation from Ward Councillors due to the fact that nobody used the land and judgement had to be made on this basis. It was not be possible to save all land in Horwich and if the Council saved one area of land then another would be lost and of the all the areas of land to be saved in Horwich this was probably the least valuable and the Council should not be

funding it as it would be difficult to justify spending £10k of public funds on one small plot of land. It was suggested that a developer would want to build on it or people may have other ideas for it. Although £10k may seem a nominal sum but is still a lot of money for the Council and could be better spent somewhere else.

There was some concern that it had not been adequately publicised. It was confirmed that two developers are interested so the price would probably go over £10k as this was a valuable piece of land to a developer. It was pointed out that Council being asked to approve proposal to buy land at £8k and commit an additional £2k for legal costs but if it were to go above that at auction, it would be a moot point anyway.

There was also concern that this could set a dangerous precedent, resulting in local residents expecting the Town Council to buy every piece of land that goes up for sale when it is not in a position to do this.

Resolved to approve the proposal from Councillor Chadwick that Horwich Town Council approves allocation of up to a maximum of £8,000 for the purchase of land at 244 Chorley New Road, Horwich and up to a maximum of £2,000 for associated legal costs from the Regeneration budget for 2021 – 2022, with consideration of options for future maintenance and any other additional costs.

Councillor Chadwick agreed to liaise with the Town Clerk with regard to the process for bidding at auction with advice to contact Borough Solicitor as the Town Clerk informed Members that she had no experience or expertise in this area. The advice was to obtain a legal pack, either by contacting Ian Coulson of Robertsons or from the auctioneers, who were possibly Pugh, which Councillor Grant offered to look into.

TO APPOINT MEMBERS TO SERVE ON THE EVENTS STEERING GROUP:

FG 7323 Resolved to appoint Councillors Brady, Chadwick, Rotheram and Williamson to serve on the Events Steering Group, to look at supporting and facilitating community events, initially for Platinum Jubilee celebrations in 2022.

TO APPROVE ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT – SCHEDULE ATTACHED:

FG 7324 Resolved to approve the accounts for payment amounting to £86,505.81.

G. Stone (Re-imbursment for monthly Zoom subscription)	£ 14.39
Nationwide Franking Sense (Quarterly copy count to 30.06.21)	£ 174.10
Nationwide Capital Finance (Quarterly rental Xerox C450 13.09.21 –12.12.21)	£ 277.36
(Quarterly rental Ricoh C2000 13.09.21 –12.12.21)	£ 351.00
Leach Briely Accountants (Completion of internal audit review to Period ending 30.06.21)	£ 510.00

Transfer to Reserve Account

£ 85,000.00

TOWN CLERKS REPORT (EMAILED TO MEMBERS) – FOR INFORMATION ONLY:

- FG 7325
- a. Grant monitoring/feedback form: Horwich RMI Cricket Club for £300 grant for equipment for summer training sessions for children 5 – 8 years old.
 - b. Summary of Town Councillors' casework

The Town Clerk's report was noted.

REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES – FOR INFORMATION ONLY:

- FG 7326
- a. Town Mayor of Horwich
The Deputy Town Mayor reported that, accompanied by the Deputy Town Mayoress he had deputised recently for the Town Mayor at the Rotary Beer Festival and also Adlington Civic Sunday.

- b. Horwich Ward Councillors

Councillor Wright provided an update on graffiti removal and in response to a query agreed to obtain clarification regarding funding for this service and ask the question at full Council if a satisfactory response was not received.

Councillor Grant: informed Members that he had made representation to Blackrod Town to Council reconsider its decision not to contribute towards the illumination of Rivington Pike during this year's Remembrance period, also that the problem of Japanese knotweed in several locations including corner Scholes Bank/bottom of Lever Park Avenue and private land at Telford Street had been reported and that the 'Night Owls' digital art performance was due to take place at the Public Hall on Thursday 16 September.

Councillor Brady informed Members that Brownlow Road/St Annes Road back streets had been cleaned up, Bolton Council had been asked to consider a 'stopping up' order to allow land at Brownlow Road/Ansdell Road to become a community garden and Councillor Brady was also looking at the Town Council providing free 'no cold caller' signs for elderly and vulnerable residents in response to recent incidents. It was confirmed that Rivington Pike Fell Race had taken place on 11 September with almost 300 Competitors taking part, also s106 monies were being looked at to see how the allocation had been spent and what was remaining. Councillor Brady informed Members that she was working with Highways on requests for traffic regulation orders in various locations and there had been a request to Area Forum for funding for a 'knee rail' at Ridgmont Park to prevent vehicle access onto rounders' pitch. It was also reported that the Cabinet had adopted the joint developing plan for climate change, along with the 'Streets for All' programme. A meeting was being arranged with Bolton Play and Youth Services to arrange future play provision arrangements and in response to a query, it was confirmed that Horwich and Blackrod Ward Councillors would be informed when this would take place and provision for the older age group 14 - 19 would also be considered

- c. Representatives on Outside Bodies

None.

Reports from Representatives was noted.

TO APPROVE THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE AS 11 OCTOBER 2021:

FG 7327 Resolved to approve the date of the next meeting as 11 October 2021.

The meeting closed at 8.24pm.

Chair.....

Date.....