

REPORT OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES MEETING HELD IN THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS, THORNE ON TUESDAY 9TH JUNE 2015 AT 7.00 PM.

Present: Cllr. A. Brookes (Chair)

Cllrs. D.Barton, C.Blackham, J.Blackham, S.J.Durant, M.Hennessey, M.Houlbrook, J.E.Martland, J.Parker, R.Porter, R.Walker and M.Williams.

15 members of the Public present.

The Chair reminded Members of the behaviour standards at meetings set out in the Code of Conduct, and encouraged a well ordered meeting

2750. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Cllr. A.Jones – Personal

Cllr. K.Redmile – work commitment

Cllr R.Turner - work commitment

Resolved: That the apologies be accepted.

2751. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

Cllr R Walker declared an interest in item 6 (vi)

Cllr S Durant in declared an interest in item 6 as she is on Planning Committee and did not speak or vote on these items

Cllr M Houlbrook declared an interest in item 6 as a Doncaster MBC Councillor

Cllrs M Houlbrook and A Brookes decalred an interest in item 11 as North East Doncaster Citizens Advice Bureau Trustees

2752. MINUTES

2752.1 Consideration was given to signing the minutes of the Policy & Resources meeting held on Tuesday 14th April 2015, pages 4231 - 4236

RESOLVED: That the minutes be signed.

2752.2 Consideration was given to signing the minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on Tuesday 19th May 2015, pages 4237 – 4242. Errors were identified in voting numbers and representatives (2614 e should be Cllr M Hennessey). 2614 I was a duplication.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be signed following amendment

2753. MATTERS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC

The Clerk reported that he had received queries about the “Matters Raised by the Public” section of the Council’s agenda and responded as follows:

The right of members of the public to attend Council meetings is clearly defined through the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. There is no general right for the public to participate in meetings. However setting aside time where the public can raise questions, or make statements is seen as good practice by NALC, and included within their model standard orders that have been adopted by this Council. The participation of the public must be welcomed, but needs to be controlled to ensure that Council business can proceed.

The rules regarding this part of the agenda are covered in the approved Standing Orders.

The purpose of this session is to allow members of the public to comment on items that will be the subject of debate later in the same meeting. They should not be debated by Councillors during this

part of the meeting, though the Chair could for example ask the Clerk to clarify a point of fact at that point.

In reality other issues are raised by the public which can be permitted at the discretion of the Chair. The length and management of the session is always at the Chair's discretion as there is no legal requirement for it to be held.

Any issues that are not included on an agenda are best raised in advance so that they can be considered for an agenda item, or dealt with in advance of any meeting. To be considered for inclusion on any agenda issues would need to be raised at least a week in advance.

The Clerk said that he would add some information regarding the "Matters Raised by the Public" section on the website.

RESOLVED: That this report be noted.

2754. MATTERS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC

There were a number of queries raised regarding the role of this part of the agenda which is an opportunity for the public to raise issues with, and challenge the Council.

The Chair was praised for his positive introductory statement.

2755. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

i) 15/00865/FUL

Erection of 2 storey extension to rear of detached house following demolition of existing outbuildings and extension at 15 Brooke Street, Thorne for Mr L. Todd.

Resolved: No observations

ii) 15/00878/FULM

Erection of 23 dwellings on approx. 0.53ha of land with associated garages and car parking on land off Marshland Road, Moorends for D. Noble Ltd.

Resolved: No objections in principle providing flood risk can be properly dealt with.

iii) 15/00893/FUL

Erection of two blocks of 4 residential apartments with associated car parking on land at Haynes Green, Thorne for WPS Developments.

Resolved: Object on grounds of overdevelopment

iv) 15/00967/FUL

Erection of single storey pitched roof extension to rear of semi-detached bungalow, following demolition of existing conservatory at 10 Edward Court, Thorne for Mr G. Whattam.

Resolved: No observations

v) 15/00992/FUL

Installation of overhead conveyor belt system to chicken processing unit at Chesterfield Poultry Company, Coulman Street, Thorne for Hanif Sahim.

Resolved: No observations.

Cllr R Walker left the meeting

vi) 15/01584/FULM

Erection of 14 dwellings following demolition of public house and buildings on approx. 0.48 ha of land (amended plans) on land off site of former Rising Sun Public House, Hatfield Road, Thorne for Mr N. Walker.

Resolved: No objections in principle providing flood risk can be properly dealt with

Cllr R Walker returned to the meeting

vii) 15/00804/FUL

Demolition of redundant outbuildings and extensions within a conservation area at DMBC Offices, Ellison Street, Thorne for Chipmunk Ltd.

Resolved: No observations

viii) 15/01140/REM

Details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of design for the erection of one dwelling on approx. 0.3ha of land (being matters reserved in outline application previously granted under ref. 11/03414/OUT ON 29.02.2011 (being resubmission of application 14/02768/REM granted on 13/01/2015) at Lock House, Union Road, Thorne for Mr M Clarke.

Resolved: No observations

ix) 15/01229/FUL

Erection of conservatory to rear of terraced house (retrospective application) at 8 Millcroft Close, Thorne for Mr D. Martindale.

Resolved: No observations.

x) 15/01162/FULM

Erection of 61 dwellings with associated road layout and landscaping on approx. 1.44 ha of land (Being Application under Regulation 4 Town and Country Planning (General) Regulations 1992) (being resubmission of application 14/00043FULM refused on 26.06.2014) on land at Coulman Street, Coulman Road, Thorne for Keepmoat Homes Ltd.

Resolved: Object to the proposal on the following grounds:

- 1. The proposal is contrary to the approved Unitary Development Plan where it is identified as Employment Land.**
- 2. The Town Council is concerned about the loss of a site suitable for development/ use by small/ medium sized local businesses as there are limited alternative sites currently available. The other allocations are mainly suitable for larger developments.**

xi) 15/01193/FUL

Formation of new access road at Omega Boulevard for Henry Boot Developments.

Resolved: No observations.

xii) 15/01198/REM

Details of Access, Appearance, Landscaping and Layout for erection of detached house & garage on approximately 0.03ha of land (being matters reserved in outline application previously granted permission under reference 12/00517/OUT on 03.01.2013) being resubmission of planning application 15/00249/REM, granted on 27.03.2015) at 54 Haig Road, Moorends for Mr J.Smith.

Resolved: No observations.

xiii) 15/01327/FUL

Extension to form new garage and utility room at ground floor level, with new storage to roof space and enlargement of bathroom at first floor level at 79n Mansion Court Gardens, Thorne for Mr M. Carling.

Resolved: No observations.

xiv) 15/01334/LBC

Listed Building Consent for the demolition of redundant outbuildings and extensions within a conservation area at DMBC Offices, Ellison Street, Thorne for Chipmunk Ltd.

Resolved: No observations

2756. FINANCE

Consideration was given to the financial report to the end of Month 1. The Clerk said that it is too early to make any realistic forecasts with regard to any changes to the year-end position. It should be noted that the expenditure to date on Administration includes the annual Insurance Premium (£39,590) which is slightly under budget.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

2757. ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Consideration was given to the Accounts Payable to 30th April 2015.

RESOLVED: That the Accounts Payable be approved.

2758. ANNUAL RETURN

The Council's Accountants have completed the year end account closure which allows the Council to complete its Annual Return to the External Auditors.

The following can be noted in the Accounts:

- a) The increase in receipts includes capital grants notably for the Walled Garden. Income from lettings etc has reduced partly due to the loss of some long-term users. A number of new users have been attracted recently, and the letting of the bungalow and the new Nursery at the Winning Post will assist.
- b) Staff costs are fairly stable. The small increase is as a result of the national pay increase, and the costs of the office apprentice who has now left.
- c) The increased expenditure includes the capital sum for the Walled Garden and a number of substantial repairs, including boiler replacements at the Winning Post and Community Centre.
- d) There has been a reduction in balances partly due to capital expenditure.
- e) There have been no major changes to the Fixed Assets. These are based on current national audit guidance which requires original values to be used, rather than current values, so, for example, the Park is valued at £700 as the Audit considers changes rather than the asset value.

The Internal Auditor's report has been received, and is summarised in the table below:

Internal Audit comment	Clerk comment
1. Record Keeping	Comment noted and welcomed
2. Account balances	The DMBC balance has been paid. I will bring a report on the other 2 outstanding balances to the Planning and Amenities Committee on 14 th July
3. Savings Balances	The FCSC guarantee does not apply to Local Authorities including Town and Parish Councils
4. Savings Account	The Bath Building Society is postal only and withdrawals can only be made using approved Council signatories. Arrangements were agreed by Council on 27 th January 2015.

5. IT backup	Noted
6. Auto enrolment	A report on this was considered by the Council on 27 th January. The majority of staff are already covered through the South Yorkshire pensions scheme
7. Council minutes	I will ensure that copies of minutes are readily available for staff
8. Pension statement	I will circulate a copy of the Pension statement to staff

RESOLVED that

1. **The Mayor and Clerk be authorised to sign the accounts, and Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Return.**
2. **The action points arising from the Internal Auditor's report be noted**

2759. INTERNAL AUDIT

The Clerk reported there was a need to formally consider the appointment of the Internal Auditor on an annual basis. There is no requirement under Standing Orders to tender this process as it is a professional service. The principal issue is whether the service is satisfactory.

GT Accounts Ltd has carried out the Internal Audit Service for the Council for a number of years. This is led by Graham Slessor who is an Associate Financial Accountant (the Institute of Financial Accountants (IFA) primary qualification. He has the necessary experience and understanding of the finance regulations that affect Town and Parish Council as well as having an appropriate financial qualification. He has a detailed knowledge of the systems that are used by the Town Council, and has made a number of recommendations for improvements over the years.

RESOLVED: That GT Accounts be re-appointed as the Council's Internal Auditor for 2015-16.

2760. SOCIAL MEDIA

The Clerk reported that at the last Council meeting it was agreed there was a need to consider how Social Media should be used. This was also raised and unanimously supported by attendees at the Electors meeting in a formal vote.

A policy for staff has previously been adopted and is included in the Staff Handbook.

Social Media is a powerful tool, and is a quick way of communicating with local people. There is a significant sector of society that uses Social Media frequently as a source of information and comment. There are also a number of difficulties with social media. It is instant, so comments can be posted in haste which cannot be retracted. Written comments do not always give the correct tone – for example humour can be misunderstood. Third party involvement and comment also cannot be controlled.

Councillors

The use of Social Media by Councillors needs to be considered in the context of the Code of Conduct which states the following:

“When a member of the Council acts, claims to act or gives the impression of acting as a representative of the Council, he/she has the following obligations.

- a. He/she shall behave in such a way that a reasonable person would regard as respectful.
- b. He/she shall not act in a way which a reasonable person would regard as bullying or intimidatory.
- c. He/she shall not seek to improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

- d. He/she shall use the resources of the Council in accordance with its requirements.
- e. He/she shall not disclose information which is confidential or where disclosure is prohibited by law.”

The Clerk made the following observations:

- a. The Code of Conduct does not cover any comments being made in a personal capacity. However Councillors will be known locally and members of the public may interpret comments as Council rather than personal comment.
- b. Comments can be made through personal or closed sites. However these comments can be put in the public domain by third parties.
- c. The Code of Conduct does not prevent Councillors making reasonable criticising the activities of the Council. However as Councillors there are a variety of other ways that this can be done (e.g. through the Clerk, Council, Leader, Chairs etc) and the appropriate forum for debate is Council meetings.
- d. The Council should not and would not wish to control any reasonable comments made by Councillors relating to personal or non-Council matters.

The following policy protocol was proposed for Councillors where they are commenting on Council issues, or matters which may be seen to be Council issues:

- a. Any use of Social Media should be considered in the light of the Code of Conduct, regardless of the intended audience.
- b. Social Media should primarily be used to promote the activities of the Council, and deal with factual issues.
- c. Social Media should not be used to criticise policies or activities of the Council where there are alternative routes for these issues to be addressed or debated.

The Clerk said that If this protocol is adopted it would be sensible for Councillors to review any historic comments to check whether these conflict with this new policy. Any complaint regarding the breach of this policy would need to be dealt with through the existing Standards procedures.

Council

This covers use of Social Media by the Council in a formal capacity through the Clerk. There has been some encouragement by national Local Council/ Clerks organisations for Town and Parish Councils to proactively use social media to communicate with parishioners. At the moment the Council makes little use of Social Media – there are Facebook pages associated with the Council Website and Neighbourhood Plan websites, but these receive little use.

As indicated above, Social Media can be a positive way of improving communication with a large number of the local community. The Clerk raised some reservations:

- a. The Town Council works in a formal manner which means that instant comment is not always possible or appropriate.
- b. Any forum that is seen as being part of the Town Council needs moderating which can be time consuming.
- c. Comments on a Town Council sponsored site may be seen as being endorsed by the Town Council even if they are made by third parties
- d. Communication is available by more traditional means which are more personal, and provides the opportunity to better understand issues being raised.

The Clerk said that he had endeavoured to make the website more current by regularly updating the news page. In addition the Thorne Times have been amenable to posting urgent news and promotional activity on their Facebook page which allows information to be circulated without the need for Council control.

The Clerk said that in the light of the above he would recommend no change to the Council Social Media activity.

Councillors felt that the agreed policy that all press notices should be prepared by and distributed by the Clerk should be re-confirmed.

RESOLVED: That

1. **A Social Media protocol be adopted as a supplement to the Code of Conduct as follows:**

Where Councillors are commenting on Council issues, or matters which may be seen to be Council issues:

- a. **Any use of Social Media should be considered in the light of the Code of Conduct, regardless of the intended audience.**
 - b. **Social Media should primarily be used to promote the activities of the Council, and deal with factual issues.**
 - c. **Social Media should not be used to criticise policies or activities of the Council where there are alternative routes for these issues to be addressed or debated**
2. **All Town Council Press notices should be prepared by and distributed by the Clerk**

Cllr C Blackham left the meeting

2761. SUB GROUPS AND REPRESENTATION

The Clerk reported that subsequent to the Council meeting on 19th May 2015 it was been suggested that an additional Member be appointed to the Community Development Sub Group in view of the volume of work that this will cover.

The Clerk reported that he'd had a discussion with the North East Doncaster Citizens Advice Bureau who have advised that they would welcome a nominated representative from the Town Council. The nominated person would become a trustee.

RESOLVED: That:

1. **Cllr K Redmile be appointed to the Community Development sub Group**
2. **Cllr A Brookes be agreed as representative on the North East Doncaster Citizens Advice Bureau be agreed**

End of the meeting 20:15.