

Main issues covered: Civic Award for Harry Hadfield/ Proposed merger of the Civic Hall and Library/ “Welcome to Poynton” Video/ Attendance at Town Council meetings by senior members of Cheshire East Council/ Coppice Road Allotments/ Poynton’s Participation in a Neighbourhood Plan.

MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT 8.00PM ON MONDAY 29th JULY 2013 IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC HALL, POYNTON.

PRESENT

Town Mayor: Cllr G Bartos

Cllrs. L A Clarke, C Gorst, I Hollingworth, Ms R Horsman, Mrs S Horsman, P Hoyland, G King, B Lewis, H Murray, Mrs J Sewart, A Smith, G Smith and R E West

Also present: Mr Harry Hadfield, representatives of Bowker Sadler Partnership Ltd and Paul Bayley, Customer Service and Libraries Manager, Cheshire East

24. Questions to the Mayor

None

25. Apologies for absence

Cllrs. M Beanland, Mrs J Saunders, M C G Sewart, and Mrs I Thornton-Maddocks

26. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

None

27. Presentation of Town Council Civic Award

The Mayor explained that Mr Harry Hadfield was not able to be present at the recent Civic Sunday reception to receive his Civic Award from the Mayor. The Clerk read out the citation, and the Mayor duly presented Mr Hadfield with his award. In thanking the Town Council for this honour, Mr Hadfield also praised the Cheshire East footpaths team for their dedication and professionalism.

28. Presentation by Bowker Sadler Partnership Ltd on the proposed merger of the Civic Hall and Library buildings

Alan Bowker introduced a Powerpoint presentation on this project. His company had been commissioned by Cheshire East to show how the two buildings, which were at different levels, might be joined. Mr Bowker made it clear that these plans were not cast in stone. Costs would also be shown, as would some alternative plans for the entrance, with extra cost implications.

A representative from Bowker Sadler Partnership Ltd then took members through the presentation, explaining the rationale for all elements of the design as he did so.

Members then gave their reaction. Cllr Murray had concerns about the canopy overhang at the entrance, and thought this would offer shelter to youngsters at night, which could lead to Anti Social Behaviour (ASB). He also asked about a waiting area within the reception. Cllr Murray liked a lot of the design, and also asked that IT requirements be thought out, while back racks would also be welcome.

Cllr Lewis emphasised that having a staffed entrance was not new, as suggested by Bowker Sadler. Maintaining this presence had always been the main driver for the project. He also suggested that if the design of the staff corridor was modified it would free up more office space. In looking at costs Cllr Lewis also asked where the £28,500 that CE offered to refurbish our current reception area had gone. Paul Bayley said that since the Civic Hall reception area would no longer exist this was now an element in CE's contribution towards the project.

Cllr Hollingworth asked if the costs that had been presented included those for project management. Paul Bayley said not, but confirmed that these would be absorbed by Cheshire East, both for the main project and for the Civic Hall modifications.

Cllr West said that the nature of the contract was important, and suggested also that the entrance to the staff corridor be moved to the reception end to make better use of the space. Cllr Clarke was reassured that the flagpole would be relocated. He went on to voice concerns about the restricted width of the public corridor to the Civic Hall – the presenter calculated this to be about 1.3m. Cllr Clarke said this was too narrow, and would need to come out. He also complained that it would be a long and convoluted route from the new reception area to the Council Chamber, adding that the new entrance and lobby would get the sun for most of the day, which could in turn lead to demands for air conditioning, which was expensive. Cllr Clarke concluded by saying he had severe reservations about the plans.

Cllr Lewis asked to refer back to the slide showing the Town Council's contribution to the project as £55,000. He asked if this was the total of the Town Council's exposure to the project as was being suggested by the slide. The Clerk explained that this would amount to c.£96k - £40k towards the main

project, and £55,000 for the Civic Hall modifications. Another c.£50k would be required to refurbish the roof, which needed to be done anyway, regardless of the main project. Cllr Gorst then voiced his concern about a significant drain on the reserves to pay the Town Council's contribution for the project. The Clerk suggested that the total of c. £150k to be funded from reserves could be split between the Civic Hall Maintenance Reserve (£50k) and the Rolling Capital Programme Fund (£100k).

Based on past experience, Cllr Murray voiced serious concerns about CE's ability to project manage this work, and said we should make it conditional that the Town Council has two members on the project management team. He was not expecting a decision tonight on who those should be. Cllr Alex Smith agreed.

Cllr Lewis said that this project was so important it should be dealt with at meetings of the full Town Council. Cllr Clarke agreed, and said the funding involved was so large that the final decision should rest with the full Town Council, although FIED should work on the detail in the meantime.

The Mayor thanked representatives from Bowker Sadler Partnership Ltd for their presentation.

RESOLVED: That the presentation is received; that a final decision on this project should be taken by the full Town Council; and that the FIED Committee should work on the detail in the meantime (13 – 1 against)

29. "Welcome to Poynton" video

Cllr Alex Smith showed members the video, and then welcomed comments. Cllr Mrs Horsman felt that it was a fantastic advert for Poynton while Cllr Ms Horsman wondered if it would benefit from a running commentary/voiceover. Cllr Smith said that it was a question of cost – there was no budget for this video, although more could be spent on the next version. Cllr Lewis felt that the shots of the signboards at the beginning were not on screen long enough, which Cllr Smith agreed to correct.

Cllr West said it was a very professional film, while Cllr Murray said that the police did not feature in it, but otherwise he described it as stunning, and said he would be very happy to promote the video when visiting elsewhere. Cllr Hoyland offered his thanks to Cllr Smith and the production team for a job well done.

Cllr Smith said he would make copies of the video available to all members as a DVD.

RESOLVED: That the screening of the video be received with thanks (NC)

30. Minutes of the meeting held on 24th June 2013

Cllr Mrs Sewart ask the Clerk to change the wording in the second paragraph of item 22 – the Town Mayor’s Network. The reference to “another unofficial pressure group” should be attributed not to the Town Council but to Cllr Murray.

RESOLVED: That, subject the amendment above, the minutes of the meeting held on 24th June 2013 be approved as an accurate record, and signed by the Mayor (13 – 1 abs)

31. Mayor’s Announcements

See attached record.

RESOLVED: That the Mayor’s announcements be received (NC)

32. Adoption of Minutes of Standing Committees

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Facilities, Infrastructure and Economic Development Committee meeting held on 3rd June 2013 be received and adopted (13-1abs)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 10th June 2013 be received and adopted (13-1abs)

With regard to the minutes of the Planning and Environment Committee held on 17th June 2013, Cllr Lewis said that he was shown as being both present and absent – he was in fact absent. The Clerk apologised, and the record corrected manually.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning and Environment Committee meeting held on 3rd June 2013 be received and adopted (13-1abs)

33. Attendance at Town Council meetings by the Leader and Deputy Leader of Cheshire East Council

A motion had been submitted in advance by Cllrs Bartos, Clarke and Mrs Horsman in support of the Leader and Deputy Leader of Cheshire East Council being invited to attend future meetings of Poynton Town Council.

Cllr Bartos explained that he had been approached by both CE Cllrs concerned, who had expressed an interest in such attendance – they could decide between them which one attended. Cllr Hoyland was very supportive

of this idea, but he would only give it his full support if the purpose for inviting them was made clear. If they came for a general chat it would be an opportunity missed – we would need to target specific areas of concern, with specific timescales for their resolution. Cllr Bartos said that Cllr Clarke had suggested some of the subjects that could be covered in the motion.

Cllr Alex Smith agreed with what had been said – we do need clear terms of reference. There should also be no overlap with micro Issues which are generally being handled well at a working level. Cllr West also agreed with previous comments, and suggested that Committee Chairmen moderate the questions. Cllr Lewis also supported the principle of the motion, adding that no Councillor should feel constrained in terms of the issues they wanted to raise.

Cllr Murray was concerned that this initiative could give prominence to trivia. Perhaps members could agree on their top three issues? He added that the focus needed to be on issues that really mattered. Cllr West agreed, and said that everyone should submit their issues so that those that are key could be aired.

In answer to a question Cllr Clarke made it clear that such sessions with the CE Leader and Deputy Leader would be in public, as with all meetings of the Town Council.

RESOLVED: That the proposal to invite the Leader and Deputy Leader to meetings of the full Town Council be approved (NC)

34. Coppice Road Allotments

The Clerk spoke to his written brief concerning the transfer of the Coppice Road Allotments to the Town Council on a long lease. Cllr Lewis said that the lease agreement should not be signed until proper controls were in place, such as byelaws, and that it should be the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor who signed the lease. He added that there should be quarterly updates on this issue, and questioned the cost of insurance cover and supervisory time for the Town Council. Hazardous materials also need to be defined.

Cllr Gorst agreed with the point raised about the cost of insurance cover, and the Clerk agreed to check with our current insurance provider, Zurich.

Cllr Clarke agreed with Cllr Lewis in terms of having byelaws in place, and for a proper relationship to be established with tenants. Cllr Lewis remarked that the Coppice Road Allotments Assn seemed loathe to accept byelaws. Cllr Murray agreed that byelaws should be in place, but thought this could be done retrospectively, and that the issue could be dealt with by FIED. Cllr Murray stated that the law regulated how much could be charged as rent for allotments. Cllr Lewis said this was incorrect - charges were not stipulated, with the law stating only that they should be “reasonable”.

Cllr Murray said that we would not know what materials might be hazardous over the next 125 years, the duration of the lease – this section should be written to take that into account. Cllr Lewis suggested there should be a schedule of such materials at the back of any byelaws, and said that the type and size of any sheds also needed to be controlled. There followed some discussion about theft from allotments, and police involvement therein.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk and Chairman of FIED address the various points raised, and refer the issue back to the Town Council prior to lease signature (NC)

35. Woodford Neighbourhood Forum and Area

The Town Council's formal response to Stockport Council's consultation on the designation of the Woodford Neighbourhood Forum and Area, following action taken under SO 51, had been circulated to members in advance.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council's response be noted (NC)

36. Poynton' participation in a Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Hoyland's brief on this subject had been circulated to members via e-mail earlier that day, although the brief had already been presented at a series of earlier informal briefings. In taking members through the Addendum to the brief, Cllr Hoyland said that Cllr Clarke had made some additional points.

Cllr Hoyland said there was risk in neighbourhood planning, but it was for example about play areas and woodland, not just concrete and bricks. The risks were nevertheless outweighed by the benefits, and Woodford and Adlington would in any case go ahead even if we did not. No planning had taken place on the Woodford site in 80 years, and the Woodford/Poynton Relief Road would cross the site. Cllr Hoyland asked members to approve the recommendations in para. 4 of the Addendum.

Cllr Lewis broadly agreed with the content of the paper. However, he expressed a concern that the paper had been made available to members late in the day. He reminded Councillors that the requirement in law to publish papers at a stated time was not for the benefit of Councillors. It was to inform members of the public so that they could make a decision on whether or not an agenda item was something that concerned them, or whether or not to attend a meeting.

Cllr Clarke had concerns about the Neighbourhood Plan process. It might lead to more development than the 200 houses already agreed for Poynton to the year 2030 by Cheshire East under the draft Town Strategy. Members should understand that this Council would not control the Neighbourhood Plan process. In the planning process held at Woodford two years ago landowners were influencing the plans for the Woodford site. Everyone involved in a

Neighbourhood Plan Panel should declare any prejudicial interests. Cllr Clarke also wondered who chose the panel, and said that any permission given tonight for Poynton's participation in such a Plan needs to be on a provisional basis.

Cllr Mrs Sewart shared the concern about such a Plan resulting in more development. She said she would be happy for Green Belt to be used for sport, and asked if landowners were bound by a Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Mrs Sewart added that she had concerns too about not being able to choose the panellists, and agreed that any permission given tonight should be provisional only.

Cllr Hoyland said that Neighbourhood Plans involved the community – power is with the people, and they decide what they want. Once a Plan is produced the final say is by means of a ballot. The same point had been made at Adlington and Woodford, who had concerns about Poynton outnumbering those two communities. No Plan should go to local people until all the elected representatives concerned are happy for it to go forward. Cllr Hoyland added that there will inevitably be landowners on the Panel, but we can be confident that our residents' thinking will be aligned with ours in terms of appropriate development. He said that when the CE Local Plan is adopted it will need to go to an Inspector for scrutiny. That was the top level plan – a Neighbourhood Plan would fall immediately beneath that. The Plan would only be a strong as any application that is put before a Planning Committee, and nothing is foolproof in planning. Given that any number of houses could be stuck on the borders of Poynton it was better to work from within that outside, and hence the need for Poynton to participate in a Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Hollingworth agreed strongly with Cllr Hoyland's comments, and said we were only agreeing to engage in a Neighbourhood Plan. In his view it would be a retrograde step if we do not go forward.

Cllr Hoyland said that his request was only for us to get involved in principle, and put forward a programme etc. He would expect the Town Council to have strong representation on the Panel, and given that it was such a significant undertaking progress updates would need to be reported to every meeting of the full Town Council.

Cllr Mrs Sewart said we would rely on Poynton residents to vote against more development in a ballot, but what % was needed? She knew of residents who wanted more development, so how secure can we feel that a sufficient number would vote against?

Cllr Hoyland said that 50% of those polled would need to vote in favour of a Plan. He said would now be happy to wind up this debate, if members were too, and asked for the recommendations in the Addendum paper to be approved. Cllr Clarke requested an amendment/addition to the recommendations, namely that information be obtained on the composition of

a Neighbourhood Plan Panel, and who selects it, and that if any member has a conflict of interest they should withdraw.

Cllr Lewis requested a named vote.

RESOLUTION: That the Town Council agrees in principle to complete a Neighbourhood Plan, subject to information being obtained on the composition of a Neighbourhood Plan Panel, including who selects it, and that if any member has a conflict of interest they should withdraw (13 – 1 against (Cllr Lewis)).

The meeting concluded at 10.20pm