

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT AND ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT 8PM ON TUESDAY 19th MARCH 2013 IN THE VERNON ROOM, CIVIC HALL, POYNTON

PRESENT

Chairman: Cllr P Hoyland

Cllrs. L A Clarke, C Gorst, Mrs J Saunders and G Smith

26. Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC)

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Jackie Weaver, Chief Officer, and Mr Philip Jackson, Chairman of ChALC, to the meeting. The Chairman explained that the Town Council is considering the benefits and cost of ChALC membership in the same way that many organisations are reviewing their budgets. The Town Council had submitted a list of questions in advance to ChALC, to which the latter had provided written answers.

Jackie Weaver said she had identified two distinct issues. First, she agreed that the Town Council had legitimate reasons to feel unhappy about the response on Town Strategies that been forwarded under the ChALC banner last year. She felt that ChALC have gone some way to addressing that issue in the written responses provided. Secondly, it highlighted to ChALC a drift that had taken place in their organisation.

The largest part of their remit is supporting Councils behind the scenes, particularly in terms of back office support and representation. There was however a faction within the Board that felt ChALC did not go far enough in terms of specifically supporting local Councils on planning issues. Jackie Weaver said for this she has to take some responsibility because she could see that there were some members of the Board who were very supportive of that view, and she felt the sense of frustration that they had. At the Annual Meeting smaller councils present were expressing their frustration at not being able to engage at a very high level with the planning system in both East and West Cheshire, so there was a mandate there for ChALC members to do more. Unfortunately the way this was delivered backfired. Although ChALC felt they were engaging at a more strategic level, the person in whom ChALC had vested responsibility for drafting the responses took a very strong and personal view, but not necessarily an anti-Poynton view. Jackie Weaver admitted that they did not check this properly.

Jackie Weaver explained that Poynton's strong objection to ChALC's critique of Poynton's Town Strategy had given the organisation the opportunity to reconsider its remit. At the Board meeting ChALC took a formal decision that they would revert to their previous stance, which is that although they would support any individual council who had issues with planning this would be in terms of pointing them in the direction of the support they need for their

individual response. ChALC's remit is therefore to ensure that there is always a fair process and proper liaison with local councils, but not to respond on their behalf.

The Chairman said that Jackie Weaver's comments acknowledged a large part of the Town Council's concerns. He added that inevitably this has led ChALC to look deeper into their organization, and asked them to point out the positive reasons for the Town Council to be part of it.

Jackie Weaver explained that ChALC is a democratic organisation. To provide strategic direction for the Board they elect from each area meeting a member representative. She said they hope that larger councils such as Poynton would get involved in the management. ChALC need Poynton because it helps steer the direction of the organisation. ChALC is dependent on those driving it. Poynton Town Council has the opportunity to have their say and influence the direction.

The Clerk said that as the officer who interfaces most with ChALC he feels he has a good working relationship with it. He noted that ChALC has a valuable role in hand holding small Parish Councils and can provide good logistical support for instance if a Clerk left for unexpected reasons. ChALC also provides good training courses such as the Code of Conduct and are always responsive to questions. The Clerk said that apart from the major upset referred to earlier the Clerk has been generally happy knowing that ChALC are there if the Town Council needed them. In reply Jackie Weaver outlined how ChALC have positively assisted a town or parish council. Also the experience ChALC has of dealing with larger councils and how they have been instrumental in bringing forward the large council of Wilmslow as well as Styal, Handforth and Crewe, not just rural parishes.

The Chairman asked what the Town Council gains from membership of ChALC which they could not otherwise achieve for themselves. Jackie Weaver said that it is difficult to envisage how a Council would react if they did not have a good Clerk in place. ChALC provides advice and guidance on any issues between the Council and its Clerk. The alternative otherwise would be for a Town Council to employ a solicitor who might not necessarily have experience of Town Councils. In addition ChALC can provide a whole raft of information about changes in law, guidance and administration which they present in a digestible form. Jackie Weaver said she was not aware of another body that represents councils as a collective and is able to lobby government or that understands the specific issues faced by local councils and the way in which they work. That is the reason the two organisations need each other. ChALC will not fall if Poynton leaves but they will be poorer for it in that it weakens ChALC not to have a large council such as Poynton on board.

Mr Jackson added that they are also involved with the Northwest region which covers Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria. All those parishes can share information and lobby. Mr Jackson stressed that the larger an organization is

the stronger it is, and the more opportunity it has to get the best for residents of Cheshire East and West and for their local councils.

Cllr Mrs Saunders appreciated the candour of the ChALC representatives. She said this has been a good opportunity for the Town Council to review its membership and for ChALC to consider their remit. She said this discussion provides a good way forward, especially on the legal advice that ChALC can provide.

Cllr Gorst checked with the ChALC representatives the suggestion that the Town Council would get more out of their membership if they had a Board member. Jackie Weaver explained that ChALC needs quality and that input from the Town Councils through the democratic process of area meetings is really important. Every member council is entitled to send three representatives to the area meeting held quarterly. One of those members can be the Clerk, but this can sometimes result in an exchange of information rather than the real purpose of the local area meeting. This is to look at local issues and how as a group of Councils they can exert influence and also share best practice. From three members each council can nominate two Board members and one deputy Board member annually to attend the ChALC Executive Board, which meets six times a year. At the annual meeting at area level there is a chance to nominate someone to join the Executive Board.

Cllr G Smith asked for confirmation that the previous breach of trust would not occur again. Jackie Weaver said that whether or not the Town Council decides to remain with ChALC they have done a great favour to ChALC. This has given a wake up call to Board members. The twenty four Board members did not read the Town Strategy document that was placed before them at the time.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council thanks Jackie Weaver and Mr Jackson for their attendance, and that the responses to questions posed by the Town Council to ChALC are received (NC)

27. Apologies for absence

Cllr A Smith

28. Declarations of Interest

None

29. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th December 2012

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Management and Establishment Committee meeting held on 11th December 2012 are approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman (NC)

30. Adult Health and Wellbeing Coordinator

The Clerk provided some background on this role. The Town Council agreed some months ago to part fund a post as a one year pilot, which Cllr Mrs Saunders thought was essential given the growing elderly population. £7,500 match funding was approved. There are some detailed outcomes for the end of Year One, which although quite challenging, are achievable. There was then a quest to find the other funding needed. The Town Council became aware that Cheshire East had a budget of £60,000 for community transport and the Town Council were successful in bidding for £10,000 of this. The challenge has been to integrate the roles of Community Transport Co-ordinator and Adult Health and Wellbeing Coordinator. The Clerk has recommended that the Town Council recruit an Adult Health and Wellbeing Coordinator with an important remit to promote community transport. This means there is now £17,500 funding for the role. The successful applicant will share an office space with the Youth Co-ordinator and in this way promote intergenerational work. The Clerk had drafted a job advertisement, job description and person specification.

Cllr Mrs Saunders confirmed that £2,000 has been received from the LAP. She added that the £10,000 from Cheshire East was a one off payment and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find funding. It is important to justify the £10,000 and possibilities include improving community transport for example by perhaps extending the Friday shopper minibus service to a second morning a week.

Cllr Hoyland drafted a line which he suggested could be inserted after the first sentence to read, "Act as a catalyst for change and improvement in the level and type of services currently available". Another amendment would be spell CAB and U3A in full for clarification to an applicant.

Cllr Clarke suggested adding to Main responsibilities on page 2, "any other duties allocated by the Clerk to the Council".

On the person specification Cllr Clarke asked if a degree is essential. Following discussion members agreed that this should read as "desirable". In addition a clean driving licence for the role should be specified.

RESOLVED: That the draft advertisement, job description and person specification is accepted with the agreed amendments; that the Clerk is given discretion to provide a suitable closing date; and that the advertisement appears in the Macclesfield Express and all other regular Town Council communications (NC)

31. Town Council workload matrix

Woodford Consultation

The Strategic Planning Document has gone through the Stockport Executive and they now await a planning application.

Queensway Revitalisation

The Working Group will be meeting with Martyn Garner later this week. He is representing the owners, the Owen family, and this is a meeting to understand the relationship between Garners, Wetherspoons, the car park and the office block next door to them. The Group hopes to use the School Lane revitalisation as an example of what the Town Council has been able to achieve, and owners need to be on board through the process. In addition the extent to which the owners are willing and able to assist needs to be understood. Cllr G Smith added that he has produced a report based on the questionnaires to present to Mr Garner.

Visitor Economy

Richard Holland is now involved too and has agreed a location at the canal for the notice board following a meeting with the Rivers and Canals Trust, successor organisation to British Waterways. Cllr Hoyland suggested it might be useful to market and promote a specific theme for Poynton.

Civic Hall/Library Complex

The Clerk is awaiting a response on the architect's site visit.

Middlewood Station

Cllr Gorst explained that since meeting with Transport for Greater Manchester he has more recently attended a meeting at Hathersage. Cllr Gorst made a representation for an additional train at 11 pm at night. They said they would take this on board but made no promises.

Business Awards

The Clerk said there is a meeting of the Working Group on 25th March 2013. The Chairman stressed that it was important to approach the business community, promote this event and demonstrate the benefits to them. Even if in the first instance this is to a smaller group of businesses. The benefits needed to be visible.

The Clerk suggested removing Broadband, Communications and the Parking Review from the matrix and this was agreed.

Community Transport

Cllr Mrs Saunders reported that the new bus services were running well, and would be reviewed in 2/3 months time.

Revitalisation of the Bird Estate Play Area

There is a meeting scheduled between Cllrs Beanland, Mrs Thornton-Maddocks and a third party.

RESOLVED: That the updated Town Council workload matrix is received (NC)

32. Town Council's Standing Orders

The Clerk explained and outlined the changes that have been made to the draft Standing Orders. The following amendments were agreed:

Page 16 – This awaits appropriate wording from NALC who will be publishing a second edition of Standing Orders for local councils. Wording from the Localism Act 2011 will then be provided by the Clerk. The Clerk will also be presenting a briefing at the next full Town Council meeting about Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, other interests and the Code of Conduct. The Clerk clarified that when the wording is available it will be referred back to the Working Group who will review it and recommend for approval.

Page 20 – Insert full stop after the word 'provision'.

Standing Order 47 can be removed.

Paragraph 57 – Awaiting wording NALC - expected in Autumn 2013.

Page 28 – Paragraph 80. Retain first sentence and remove the wording that follows.

RESOLVED: That the proposed draft changes to the Town Council's Standing Orders are received with the agreed amendments, and that these are recommended for adoption at the Town Council meeting on 25th March 2013 (NC)

33. Protocol concerning the passing of former Parish and Town Councillors, Chairmen and Mayors

The Clerk explained that normally the Town Mayor writes a letter of condolence to the next of kin on behalf of the Poynton Town Council. This is then presented at the next full Town Council meeting. Following discussion members agreed that it is important to recognise an individual's contribution and service to civic life. This is as a kindness on behalf of the Town Council

acknowledging a person's service whenever possible. The Chairman summarised that the general principle is that if a prominent member of the community has made a significant contribution to community life, regardless of an individual's position or status, a letter is sent to their next of kin. Where possible Councillors should also be informed of the funeral details and a Councillor attend if possible. If members learn of the death of any such individuals would they please inform the Clerk.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report is received and that the Council proceed in this way in future (NC)

The meeting concluded at 9.25 pm