

DISS TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES
DRAFT

Minutes of the meeting of the **Town Council** held in the **Council Chamber** at **Diss Corn Hall** on **Wednesday 10th April 2024** at **7.15pm.**

Present: Councillors: D. Collins, M. Gingell, S. Kiddie, A. Kitchen, K. Murphy (Chair), S. Olander, R. Peaty, L. Sinfield, E. Taylor, S Browne, D Craggs, A Goulder, J. Welch & J. Robertson

In attendance: Sarah Villafuerte-Richards (Town Clerk/Chief Executive Officer)
Sonya French (Dep Town Clerk/Chief Operations Officer & RFO)
Robert Ludkin (Facilities & Buildings Manager)
County / District Councillor Kiddie
District Councillor Minshull
1 member of the public

FC0424/01 **APOLOGIES**

There were none.

FC0424/02 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

There were none.

FC0424/03 **MINUTES**

Members confirmed the minutes of the Full Council meetings on 20th March 2024. It was

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meetings of Full Council held on 20th March 2024 as a true record to be signed by the Town Mayor.

FC0424/04 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

County / District Councillor Kiddie reported on the next phase of the National Grid's public consultation regarding the proposed pylons from Norwich to Tilbury which runs until the end of May. There will be a public event on 15th May at Diss Football Club and attendance at and engagement with the consultation was encouraged. It was noted that the cables to the west of Diss will be buried under Wortham Ling but that the impact of the 50m tall pylons around Roydon will be huge & the map shows the new route without the existing pylons.

The major highway schemes are completed, and they have recently recruited a second Ditchwalker to help manage flooding issues. They are carrying out surface dressing when the weather / resources allow. The entrance to Roydon village hall will be resurfaced through his member grant, which has now been spent. The remaining funds are being put towards the circular Beacon cycle route signs now in situ and for a sign in Croft Lane with location to be determined.

The parking arrangements for the Carnival using the southern John Grose site have been agreed. District councillor grants are now available for ideas (£1k). Diss Rugby Club is hosting a major festival May bank holiday weekend.

It was noted that there needed to be a county-wide strategic approach to the National Grid proposals to elicit an effective outcome and that involving parliament is necessary.

District councillor Minshull reported that their Council Leader, John Fuller, has been made a Lord and as such will be stepping down as Leader after 17 years. They will elect a new Leader at their Annual Meeting.

The Development Management Committee approved the new Aldi store development on the Feather Factory site. They had received lots of emails in favour of the development creating jobs for the town.

The land and funds to build a new GP surgery on the south side of Park Radio has been agreed. The swimming pool development is on schedule and the conversion of Clare House from old persons' residence to accommodation for the homeless is due for completion at the end of May.

It was confirmed that it is likely one of the GPs in the current practice will move freeing up space. Together with a redesigned bus station, this will complete a £16m+ investment in Diss alongside the dry leisure centre and will transform the area from the fire station to the Thatcher's Needle. It was noted that the preliminary planning application from Lawns Medical Centre for an extension on their premises may be at odds with plans.

There was a question regarding whether more buses are planned for Diss given bus access to the railway station. County cllr Kiddie is investigating why the project was signed off as bus exit only as this was not the agreed plan and County funds were used to improve access/egress for the public.

(Action: KK; immediately)

Cllrs Kiddie & Minshull are now Chair & Deputy Chair of Bressingham & Fersfield Parish Council following the resignation of all their councillors.

FC0424/05 **ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business raised.

FC0424/06 **FINANCE**

a) Members noted bank outgoings for March 2024.

b) Members noted the Income & Expenditure report for March 2024.

c) Members noted Earmarked Reserves for March 2024.

FC0424/07 **QUARTERLY REPORT**

Members received the 3rd finance quarterly report (reference 54/2324) previously seen on the March Executive agenda and the Deputy Town Clerk was thanked.

FC0424/08 **ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR**

Members discussed a candidate for the role of Town Mayor and considered the election of a Deputy Mayor prior to nomination. The benefits of having a Deputy Mayor include succession planning into the Mayor role, support for the Mayor, the training and shadowing opportunity & the substitute for the Mayor. However, authorities that have a Deputy don't usually also have a Council Leader whose role is to deputise for the Mayor and there are already 6 different senior roles on Council to include the four Chairs.

There was discussion regarding the need to formalise the role and it was agreed that the election of a Deputy Mayor could be reconsidered early 2025 in readiness for the May election(s). The Clerk will also circulate the Mayor's handbook which provides a helpful guide to the role.

Four members indicated that they would like to be considered as Mayor - councillors Browne, Kitchen, Murphy and Taylor, all having had the experience of being Mayor previously and respecting the significance and responsibilities that come with such a role. It was noted that it is an honorary position that should be earned. It was

RESOLVED: To reconsider the election of a Deputy Mayor at the January meeting of Council.

(Action: Clerk; by 02.01.25)

FC0424/09 **PROGRESS REPORT**

Members noted progress on decisions made at the last meeting.

FC0424/10 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted that the next meeting of Full Council is scheduled for Wednesday 8th May 2024 at 7.15pm.

FC0424/11 **PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSIONS TO MEETINGS)**

Councillors considered a resolution under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 and Standing Orders 3d to exclude members of the public and press in order to discuss the following item which is properly considered to be of a confidential nature.

FC0424/12 **DISS YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Members received a *confidential* update regarding the future of the Diss Youth & Community Centre (DYCC) following the last meeting.

The estimated costs of a new roof are circa £400k given the specialist nature of removing the RAAC and installing a temporary roof to keep the building watertight before a new permanent roof can be built. This assumes that the existing structure will support the load.

Members considered the affinity that users and customers have with the building, the wish of the building's benefactor that any proceeds from the future sale of the DYCC would be used to provide community facilities elsewhere in the town and are committed to working diligently to find a solution.

Several options were discussed including replacing the roof, demolishing the existing building and rebuilding a more fit for purpose facility on the existing site, selling the site and building a facility on another site & considering how the facilities and / or services can be provided in a different way.

All options require an understanding of the requirements of existing and potential users and the demand for youth and community space to ensure that any facility meets the needs of the town and surrounding area and is financially viable long-term.

At 21.15, it was

RESOLVED: *To suspend Standing Order 3y to allow the discussion to continue.*

Given forthcoming investment by the District Council in leisure facilities in Diss, it will be crucial that the Town Council works closely with the District Council to maximise synergies.

Work will then be required to cost the proposals, consider return on investment long term and source appropriate funding.

It was agreed that this is complex decision, requiring significant investment, which the Council needs to work with the community to get right. It was

RESOLVED: That an Action Group of cllrs Goulder, Peaty, Robertson & Taylor work with the Clerks to prepare an options appraisal regarding the future of the Diss Youth & Community Centre.

(Action: AG / RP / JR / ET / Clerks; immediately)

Meeting Closed: 9.32pm.

Councillor Murphy
TOWN MAYOR

Post meeting, there was an update regarding Carnival. Committee has agreed to an additional evening session of entertainment, which requires member support. Staff will have worked a very long day and would not be able to work longer. Thanks were extended to Councillors Craggs and Peaty who volunteered. The safety around the departure of stallholder vehicles from the Park post the end of the afternoon session given the extended event will require careful consideration. It was also noted that several members have left the sub-committee, and the significant workload is being undertaken by a few key members. Members were asked to consider if they could volunteer any time to help on the 16th June and to confirm by Monday.