

DISS TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES

A minute's silence was held in memory of former Town Councillor Jackie Talbot who sadly passed away in August.

Minutes of the meeting of the **Town Council** held in the **Council Chamber** at **Diss Corn Hall** on **Wednesday 13th September 2023** at **7.15pm.**

Present: Councillors S. Browne, M. Gingell, S. Kiddie, K. Murphy (Chair), S. Olander (ex-officio)
R. Peaty, J. Robertson, L. Sinfield, E. Taylor, G. Waterman, J. Welch &
J. Wooddissee.

In attendance: Sarah Villafuerte-Richards (Town Clerk/Chief Executive Officer)
County / District Councillor Kiddie
District Councillor Minshull
1 (additional) member of the public

FC0923/01 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from councillors Collins (leave) and Kitchen (prior arrangement).

FC0923/02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

Minute No.	Councillors Name	Personal/Other Interest	Pecuniary Interest	Reason
FC0923/07	R. Peaty	X		This councillor is a Trustee and Treasurer of Diss Museum and has a dispensation for such.

FC0923/03 MINUTES

Members confirmed the minutes of the July meeting. It was

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Full Council held on 26th July 2023 as a true record to be signed by the Town Mayor.

(Action: Town Clerk; immediately)

FC0923/04 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were 3 members of the public in attendance. District Councillor Minshull updated members on Nutrient Neutrality. Diss is open to development because a five-year land supply couldn't be demonstrated. Their Leader has been lobbying and this should be modified in the bill through parliament before November. The amendment will include a scheme for purchasing credits to offset any harm for purchasing land in high nutrient area.

The plans are being drawn up for their recently purchased former John Grose site. Diss Town Council has been approached to meet on the subject. £1.3m has been secured to upgrade the swimming pool and the works planned should last for up to 30 years.

They have employed an Early Intervention Officer to deal with nuisance issues before they become considerable problems, which will lead to happier residents and cost savings.

The Pride in Place grant bid for the Beacon extension project was successful and £1k of member grant funding has been allocated to the Under 7 Diss Town Football team for new equipment. Funds are still available to community groups if they wish to apply.

Questions were raised regarding the shallowing of the pool, which would remain at competition depth, the park hotel situation and the recent purchase of Clare House.

It was reported that Clare House was closed by Saffron Housing as it was not dementia friendly. It could not be refurbished, and a small number of residents were affected and there were never plans to reopen as care home. The purchase phase is confidential hence no consultation and it is being refurbished to re-open in May to house Ukrainian families whose host families need their spare rooms back, having accommodated them for over 18 months. The cost of hotel accommodation would have been around £800 per week. The District has relatively low levels of homelessness and rough sleepers. The purchase decision will save millions and it was Saffron's commercial decision to sell the building. Demolishing the houses to rebuild would not have increased their stock and therefore made no financial sense.

The housing of asylum seeker families in Diss is an arrangement between the Park hotel and the Home Office. The District Council was informed very late, have had very limited involvement other than pushing hard for families over individuals and discussions around required support. All education and health provision is being provided by the Home Office so there should be no impact on schools and doctors. Great Yarmouth managed to overturn a decision to accommodate asylum seekers for hotels situated on the sea front however over 50 hotels are still being used in the back streets.

Concerns were raised regarding the lack of communication with the Town Council regarding these two matters and particularly with the Planning department for which a meeting is being scheduled with the District Council.

County Councillor Kiddie reported that there would be a gathering on Saturday 30th September at 10am in Wortham Ling regarding the pylon line planned through Diss & Roydon and members would be welcome. He thanked the Town Council for providing information regarding the amendments needed to the Beacon cycle route, which have covered the start to finish but not the reverse.

A member of public spoke about opportunities for sponsorship for Diss Museum and that their Trustee vacancy may provide a route to inviting them to participate. She also talked about opportunities for drama students at local schools to help resource activities such as the recent and popular ghost walks at no cost. It was noted that Diss Town Council is looking to engage young people more and there could be opportunities to collaborate.

FC0923/05 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business which the Town Mayor or Town Clerk had previously been informed of at least 24 hours before the meeting.

FC0923/06 FINANCE

- a) Councillors noted the bank outgoings for July & August 2023. There were queries regarding the purpose of the payments for LED lighting at the DYCC & gas for the Cemetery bungalow given no tenant.

(Action: RFO; immediately)
- b) Members noted Income & Expenditure reports for July & August 2023.
- c) Councillors noted the Earmarked Reserves for July & August 2023.
- d) Members received the first quarterly financial report April – June 2023 (report 20/2324 referred). It was

RESOLVED: To approve the virement of the budget if required up to £4,244 from cost code Council Properties (240) to administrative overheads (280) at year end to allow both codes to remain within budgetary tolerances subject to the two cost headings above being not overspent.

- e) Councillors noted that the external auditor report and certificate for the Council's Year End 2022/23 Accounts has been received and no matters have come to their attention

giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

FC0923/07 **COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME**

Councillors considered recommendations from the Grants Panel regarding four funding applications. Members were reminded that the criteria for the allocation of funds excludes paying wages. It was

RESOLVED: to approve the recommendations by the grants panel as follows:

1. To refuse the application from Diss Corn Hall
2. To refuse the application from Diss Museum
3. To approve an amended grant amount of £5,000 to Diss Town Football Club
4. To approve an amended grant amount of £5,000 to MTM Youth Services

(Action: Town Clerk / RFO; immediately)

Post resolution, councillor Peaty spoke in his capacity as Trustee and Treasurer of Diss Museum explaining their challenging financial situation. Their electricity bill has increased by 70%, grant donations total £7-£8k, rent is £6k and the Museum Manager is paid £3,300 per year. Without dramatic change the Museum won't survive. There are some things they can do and reserves that will help for a while but need ideas of support that the town could give to Museum to help for the long term. It was noted that the successful ghost walk would run again, and that crowdfunding could be considered as well as the suggestion of sponsorship.

FC0923/08 **DISS YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Members considered a quotation to re-inspect the DYCC roof. It was noted that a quote for the scaffold tower was still awaited but expected to be in the region of £1k and that grants should be investigated prior to placing the order given it's a public building and the government is funding school works. It was

RESOLVED: to approve expenditure of up to £3,500 allocated to DYCC Earmarked Reserves to re-inspect the DYCC roof subject to investigation of possible funding to help cover costs.

(Action: Town Clerk / FBM; immediately)

FC0923/09 **PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER**

Councillors considered the Council's response to South Norfolk's formal consultation regarding the proposed Public Spaces Protection Order for Vehicle Related Anti-Social Behaviour. It was

RESOLVED: to agree with questions 1 and 2 and for 3, propose that the Public Spaces Protection Order is in operation throughout the whole week rather than from 18:00 Thursday to 06:00 Tuesday to avoid the Anti-Social Behaviour simply shifting to Tuesday – Thursday.

(Action: Town Clerk; immediately)

FC0923/10 **CHANGING PLACES TOILET**

Members received a report (reference 21/2324) regarding a changing places toilet provision in Diss. The Clerk would provide cllr Sinfield with contact for Tesco to follow up to determine where the others may be located. If they exist, consider adding them to the town maps when next update takes place.

(Action: Town Clerk / cllr Sinfield; immediately)

FC0923/11 **PARISH PARTNERSHIP FUNDING**

Councillors considered report reference 22/2324 regarding costs of installing a footway through the Sports Ground site to improve connectivity for users.

It was noted that Croft Lane would not be feasible but that the Sports Ground proposal would significantly improve site access. The Council would not wish to remove any mature trees if it could be avoided but additional trees could be planted on site as part of the project to compensate for any losses. It was

RESOLVED: the council initiates a consultation process to gauge public opinion on the Sports Ground footway proposal before applying to the Parish Partnership Bid.

(Action: Deputy Town Clerk; immediately)

FC0923/12 D-DAY 80 ANNIVERSARY

Members considered the appointment of the Beacon sub-committee to consider an event to mark the 80th Anniversary of D-Day on 6th June 2024. It was noted that the Museum should be involved and that they have a huge amount of material relating to WWII. It was

RESOLVED: to appoint the Beacon sub-committee to consider an event to mark the 80th Anniversary of D-Day on 6th June 2024.

(Action: Town Clerk; immediately)

FC0923/13 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH-ON EVENT

Councillors received an update (report reference 23/2324 referred) regarding plans for the Christmas Lights Switch-on event on Saturday 2nd December. It was noted that there has been a record level of sponsorship and it was suggested that the Museum might like to participate.

(Action: RP; immediately)

FC0923/14 STRATEGIC PLAN

Members received an update following the first meeting of the strategic plan review action group. There is huge potential regarding the Sports Ground site and other bodies including higher tier authorities and funding bodies such as Sports England would need to be involved. Members discussed providing 3G / 4G sports pitches which demand £60 per hour but cost approximately £250k* to build. School provision tends not to be open to the public and the next nearest provision of pitches is Walsham (- 10 miles from Diss). Diss Town FC may be interested. There was discussion regarding the less desirable location of the Sports Ground site for youth & community provision but that if the offer is enticing this should negate its less central positioning.

It was noted that a meeting is being scheduled early October with the District's Director for People and Communities to look at their plans for leisure provision.

Cllrs Peaty, Waterman and Wooddissee have volunteered to support the community engagement activity on the Market Place at the end of September.

(Action: Clerk; immediately)

Post meeting note – estimated cost calculator suggests costs of 4G pitch with highest spec upwards of £500k.

FC0923/15 PROGRESS REPORT

Councillors noted the progress on decisions made at the last meeting of Council.

FC0923/16 MEMBER FORUM

Members considered information or issues relevant to Council from members for brief discussion, action or inclusion on a future agenda.

Cllr Taylor reminded members of the Diss & District Neighbourhood Plan Referendum taking place on 28th September (7am – 10pm) at the DYCC. They are looking for as much support as possible and encouraged everyone to vote.

Cllr Waterman shared his concerns regarding the Park hotel You Tube video explaining that it is not the energy we want manifesting in the town. On a more positive note, the Park enhancement scheme has started with five new trees planted.

It was noted that the District Council had more updates for the Town Council in September post the August break but this shouldn't prevent higher tier authorities from communicating with town and parish councils during this period.

The condition of certain unused buildings in Mere St is having a considerable impact on the appearance of the town and both owners have been emailed. It was noted that permission could be sought for additional laminates on shop windows to improve the situation and the Diss Community Team previously supported this financially.

The RFO needs more councillors as signatories and councillors Browne, Sinfield and Wooddissee volunteered their services.

(Action: RFO; immediately)

The member of the public recommended that the Town Council consider becoming more assertive in its relationships with other bodies given frustrations. It was noted that a meeting is being scheduled with the District Council in October. An invitation to the next meeting of the strategic planning action group was extended to the resident.

(Action: Clerk; immediately)

FC0923/17 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Councillors noted that the next meeting of Full Council is scheduled for Wednesday 15th November 2023 at 7.15pm.

FC0923/18 **PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSIONS TO MEETINGS)**

Members 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.

FC0923/19 **VISIT DISS WEBSITE**

Councillors considered two proposals to create a Visit Diss website from Red Dune Ltd and One Press Publishing (confidential report reference 24/2324 referred).

The consensus was that a Visit Diss website would be a useful tool to attract visitors to Diss and provide useful information to visitors and residents. However, given the changing demographic of the town it was agreed that expanding the Council's presence on Instagram would engage the younger generation.

Cllr Waterman agreed to summarise his thoughts in an email to members post meeting. Councillors were disappointed that the Diss Community Team did not support a financial contribution to this project particularly given the market towns initiative funding provided to the DCT's original constitution of the Town Team for this type of activity. It was

RESOLVED: To appoint Red Dune Ltd to develop a Visit Diss website as per quotation received with expenditure of £1,500 allocated to General Reserves / Bank Interest and with ongoing annual costs of £390 to be budgeted separately from 2024-25 under Promotion (power – encourage tourism to the council's area / statutory provision LGA 1972, s.144 / General Power of Competence.

(Action: Clerk / GW; immediately)

Meeting Closed: 21:15 hours.

Councillor Murphy
TOWN MAYOR