

LEEK TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the General Purposes Committee held Tuesday 21st January 2020

Chairman: Cllr. L. Swindlehurst

Present: Cllrs: Benefer, Cawley, Coleman, Emery, Johnson, Molson, Ottewell, M. Swindlehurst, Wales, Wood & Worthington

Three members of the public were present.

A minute's silence was held for the late Barbara Wood who was a member of Leek Twinning and had recently produced the booklet about Leek and Este.

The police gave an update on crime in Leek – see attached.

53. **Minutes of the Meeting** held 17th December and 19th November were received for Chairman's signature.
54. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Interests and consideration for the granting of Dispensations** Brian declared an interest in 57 (a).
55. **Precept for 2020/21** The draft Precept, the Financial Statement and Financial Report for 9 months ending 31st December 2019 were received. An earlier draft of the Precept had been considered at the meeting held in December.
- Councillors made the following comments:
- How have the hours for an administrative assistant been calculated.
If fewer hours were offered it would be difficult to attract candidates.
The 15 hours could be spread over a number of days per week.
The clerk stated that a draft Job and Person specification had been circulated at the meeting in December and advice regarding pay scales had been obtained from other town councils.
- It was resolved to employ an administrative assistant for 15 hours per week. Cllr.Worthington voted against it and requested this was minuted.
- A working group (Cllrs. Coleman, Johnson and L. Swindlehurst) would be established to consider the job description, salary and pension of the new administrative assistant.
- Cllr Wales proposed that the Precept should be set at £181,284 (An increase of nine pence per week, or 20.14% increase for a Band D household and this was seconded by Cllr. M. Swindlehurst).
- Councillors made the following comments:
- There had been an increase in the precept of £25,000 for the Foxlowe a few years ago, but the Precept had not subsequently been reduced.
Costs have risen and income has reduced over the last few years.
18 of the parishes in the Staffordshire Moorlands have larger precepts than Leek. Cheadle's precept is £72.73 per band D household.
- Cllr. Worthington proposed that the Precept should rise to £26.10 per annum for a Band D household or 12.29%.
- A vote was taken on Cllr. Worthington's proposal – 2 councillors voted in favour, 8 voted against and 2 abstained.
- A vote was taken on Cllr. Wales' proposal – 9 councillors voted in favour, 2 abstained and **Cllr. Worthington** voted against.
- It was resolved to set the precept at £181,284 for 20/21.**

56. **Monthly reports/updates:**

- i) Allotments – Three plots have been cleared by allotment holders on Beggars Lane and are ready to be re-let.

A few tenants have continued to pay the rent by cash.

- ii) Events – A meeting will be held with the security company that provided security guards for Remembrance Sunday.

There will be a meeting in March with the Safety Advisory Group to discuss the risk assessments for VE75 and Party in the Park events. Thanks were conveyed to Cllr. Molson for all his work regarding safety and security for Remembrance Sunday and the Christmas lights event.

A working group would be set up to assist with the organisation of the Remembrance parade at Ball Haye Green.

The person who had damaged the Christmas tree in Sparrow Park would repay the cost to repair it.

The Terms of Reference for the Events committee were approved and the Chairs of the other committees would produce similar terms of reference.

The clerk would attend a two-day course on Public Event, Health and Safety Management at Moorlands House on 5th and 6th March. The cost will be £160.00.

- iii) Friends of the Nicholson War Memorial – Quotes are being obtained for a Condition Report for the Nicholson War Memorial and Ball Haye Green War Memorial.

Leek Town Lands Trust is considering a formal agreement with Leek Town Council, as it owns the land that the war memorial is built upon.

- iv) Neighbourhood Plan – At the last meeting potential sites for development were considered and a workshop will take place to discuss the aspirations of the Neighbourhood Plan.

- v) Leek Moorlands Hospital – It was stated that North Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had, earlier that evening, voted: to not reinstate the beds at Leek Moorlands Hospital, to remove tier 4 services and for the hospital to become a care hub. Rehabilitation and assessment care will move to the Haywood Hospital and care homes.

Councillors made the following comments:

All the public meetings held in Leek had been very well attended.

3000 cards had been sent to the CCG during the public consultation period.

Thanks were given to Save Leek Hospital for all their hard work.

- vi) Twinning – A card and condolences would be sent to the late Barbara Wood's family. Seventeen people will be going to Este en Fiore in April. Twinning Committee will be working with the town council's Events Committee to organise the Pumpkin Festival.

- vii) Russell Street – Staffordshire County Council has still not yet responded with regards to utility services under the area.

- viii) Climate Change – Members of the group will be attending Party In the Park in June and a Bee Friendly event will be held later in the year. The district councillor officer responsible for monitoring pollution will be invited to attend a town council meeting. The Woodland Trust is giving away trees, which could be used on Westwood Recreation Ground to help clean up the air pollution from cars.

57. **Finance/Audit**

- a) **Payment of Accounts** In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 section 5 (150), the following were accepted for payment.

- b) **Financial Statement and Financial Report** The report for the 9 months to 31st December 2019 was received.

58. **Leek Trestle Market** Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst's report was received. Councillors made the following comments:

SMDC is to refurbish the Trestle Market and open it for market traders on an additional day.

The refurbishment has been planned for a long time and substantial amounts of money will be spent on it.

It is not suitable for an Events building –it is acoustically unsuitable.

It has not been used for events for a long time.
Events organisers could use the Churnet Room.
If the stalls were flexible, it could be opened up for events as well.
There has been no public consultation.
Are there traders wanting to rent these stalls. The current traders have not been consulted.
It is the largest open space in Leek in the town centre, which is next to a car park.
It is a good alternative space if the weather is inclement.
Scooterfest has been told that they cannot use it.
It has had a variety of uses over the years, such as a recruitment area in WW1, a place where evacuees assembled in WW11 and for boxing tournaments.
A lot of innovative ideas are coming from the community.
There are communication problems between Leek Town Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

59. **Correspondence** Staffordshire County Council is consulting on its proposed school admission arrangements for the 2021-22 academic year. <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Admissions-primary/Current-arrangements/Overview.aspx>
Any comments to be made by 31st January 2020.
60. **To receive items for information** To report matters for information not on the agenda and to raise items for future agendas
- a) **Leek Mayor's Funds** Two signatories (Cllr. Cawley and Cllr Johnson) will be added to the Mayor's Charity Account.
 - b) **Rural Market Towns Group -** Information was received from the Rural Services Network.
 - c) **Cllr. Lyn Swindlehurst** had spoken to the district council's Asset Manager, who would provide a definitive list of who is responsible for bus shelters and benches etc. He may also be able to help to source the Christmas trees.
 - d) **Cllr. Wales stated that** there are two vacant houses adjacent to Moorlands House car park that are owned by SMDC. They are empty and the district council is losing out on rent and rates for the properties.

Chairman.....

Date.....