

LEEK TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the General Purposes Committee held on 18th July 2023

Chairman: Cllr. L Swindlehurst

Present: Cllrs: M. Swindlehurst, P. Powner, K. Hoptroff, D. Hilyer, K. Nicholls, D. Young, S. Wales, B. Birch, S. Webster, M. Worthington and W. Cawley.

6 members of the public were in attendance,

Minutes - D. Wheat, Town Clerk

22. Welcome: The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the agenda ahead.

23. Apologies: All present

24. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Interests and consideration for the granting of Dispensations:

None were disclosed.

25. Minutes of the General Purposes Meeting held on 20th June 2023 were received as a correct record, approved and signed by the Chairman.

Proposed - Cllr. L. Swindlehurst - Seconded - Cllr. M. Swindlehurst - Motion Carried.

26. Matters Arising: Matters arising were covered when noted in the preceding Town Council meeting.

27. Guest Speaker: Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism from SMDC.

The LUF (Levelling Up Fund) bid is now in progress for applications. Plans are now well ahead to get these projects moving as the funding needs to be spent by March 2025. The Tourism Strategy for the Staffordshire Moorlands was developed by the previous administration. Gratitude was given to Cllr. Keith Flunder who has set up a clear pathway. The Towns and Parishes need to be fully engaged. The decisions cannot just come from the District Council. Consultation and information need to be disseminated across the whole area. The sense of place and the local knowledge of the residents in the Parishes is vital to understanding what the Moorlands have to offer.

Cllr. Swindlehurst would like to see the three main Towns holding joint events. The Churnet Valley Festival idea is back on the agenda for a week-long festival to celebrate the natural landscape and industrial heritage of the Churnet Valley.

SMDC officers: The District Council are looking at ways to make joint appointments to work across the Towns and Parishes to bring support, improve events, share ideas and good practice on how the District can improve. Student placements for MA work experience and research opportunities in areas like marketing and tourism are being investigated. The SMDC website is technically good for portal-based access of information, but not good as a tool to attract visitors to the area.

The tourism website 'Enjoy Staffordshire' is not well used by local businesses. It is not serving its purpose to show the full offer of activities and attractions, food and retail outlets available. A review needs to be done of the social media and the website provision.

Cllr. Wales asked if it is in SMDC's strategy to bring back the Tourist Information Centre into the Market Place? Cllr Swindlehurst responded to explain that the staffing situation is currently that the Tourist Information officer also covers the Nicholson Art Gallery. Funding an additional salary as well as hiring a building would need to be considered. It was discussed that a Tourist Information point should at least be open on Market days even if as a Market Stall. When the Nicholson Institute is re-developed through the LUF Funding, the Art Gallery, the Library and the Tourist Information Centre will be re-evaluated.

Cllr. Worthington remarked that a shop in the market Place would be favorable as it needs to be accessible and not up a flight of stairs.

Cllr. Cawley commented that with his Cabinet role for Communities, he will be reviewing the Art and Culture Strategy and public engagement with these facilities. He hopes to incorporate the Industrial Heritage

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of the Moorlands to reinforce the communities' sense of place. To include Architecture across the Moorlands, the Mining communities, the Canal and Railways of the Churnet Valley, which are all an integral part of the Community and Rural aspects of the Strategy. He gave an example of Consall and Froghall being a hive of industry in the early 1900's. Our industrial heritage has shaped the Moorlands as we now know it.

Cllr. Lyn Swindlehurst then spoke about the recent public meeting in the Foxlowe where members of the public expressed their concerns about losing the library. Representatives were there from the County Libraries service to re-assure members of the public that the library will not close.

Thanks were expressed to Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst for reporting to the Town Council on the District Councils Leisure and Tourism Strategy.

28. Committee Reports:

At the June meeting it was resolved that Committee discussions would only take place if a written report was submitted for circulation. Points of Clarification were invited from the written reports:

- a) **Allotments** no report
- b) **Events** no report
- c) **War Memorial:** A written report was circulated. There were no questions arising.

Working Group Reports:

- d) **Climate Change:** The minutes of the last meeting were circulated. There were no questions arising.
- e) **Bank House:** An update will be given under the confidential item 33.
- f) **Twinning** no report

29. Finance and Governance:

- a) **Finance Committee:** A report from first finance committee was circulated – No questions were raised.

b) Community Grant applications:

- i. **Leek Allotment and Gardeners Association** – Request for £200.00 to help with their Annual Show. The Council asked for clarification that the grant is not to be used for prize money. It was agreed that if evidence is received from the Allotment Association the grant can be approved due to the date of the event being imminent.
A vote was cast with 11 in favour and 1 abstaining.
- ii. **Astounding Arts** – Grant request for £200 towards the Buxton & Leek Creative Art & Design Degree Shows
The Council asked for clarification on how the funds are used.

c) In accordance with Local Government Act 1972 section 5 (150), payments were approved for the following payments in June:

Date June	Net	VAT	Total	Description	Chq.No
30.05.2023	£223.79	£0.00	£223.79	Pension Contribution (employer)	DD
31.05.2023	£23.10	£0.00	£23.10	Bank Charges	DD
05.06.2023	£665.60	£0.00	£665.60	General Duties	8196
05.06.2023	£226.67	£11.33	£238.00	Nicholson Clock Electricity	DD
06.06.2023	£39.74	£1.99	£41.73	Bank House Gas Supply	DD
09.06.2023	£2,797.92	£0.00	£2,797.92	Grant Foxlowe	8197
09.06.2023	£199.00	£0.00	£199.00	Grant Moorlands Radio	8198
09.06.2023	£11,000.00	£0.00	£11,000.00	Grant CAB	8199
09.06.2023	£1,000.00	£0.00	£1,000.00	Grant Leek & District Sports	8200
09.06.2023	£12.00	£0.00	£12.00	Window Cleaner	8201
09.06.2023	£1,942.00	£388.40	£2,330.40	Planters & Hanging Baskets	8202
10.06.2023	£435.00	£0.00	£435.00	General Duties	8203
10.06.2023	£31.64	£6.33	£37.97	Maintenance Supplies	8203
10.06.2023	£110.80	£22.16	£132.96	Mileage (Lengthsman)	8203
10.06.2023	£8.00	£0.00	£8.00	Maintenance Supplies	8203
10.06.2023	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	Cheque Cancelled	8204
12.06.2023	£10.77	£0.54	£11.31	Bank House Gas Supply	DD
18.06.2023	£316.07	£63.21	£379.28	Telephone & Broadband	DD
18.06.2023	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	Cheque Cancelled	8204
19.06.2023	£116.08	£0.00	£116.08	Bank House Water	8205
19.06.2023	£420.00	£0.00	£420.00	General Duties	8206
19.06.2023	£39.99	£8.00	£47.99	Maintenance Supplies	8206
19.06.2023	£467.50	£93.50	£561.00	Internal Audit	8207
19.06.2023	£311.20	£0.00	£311.20	Allotment Notice Boards	8208
26.06.2023	£555.00	£0.00	£555.00	General Duties	8209
26.06.2023	£2,599.60	£0.00	£2,599.60	Salaries	8210/1
26.06.2023	£155.00	£0.00	£155.00	Signage (Chatty Bench)	8212
27.06.2023	£583.47	£0.00	£583.47	PAYE	8213
28.06.2023	£26.60	£0.00	£26.60	Bank Charges	DD
28.06.2023	£137.95	£27.59	£165.54	Weed Treatment	8213
28.06.2023	£223.79	£0.00	£223.79	Pension Contribution (employer)	DD
Total	Payments	June	£25,301.33		

Proposed Cllr. M. Swindlehurst – Seconded Cllr. B Birch – Payments approved

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d) Quartley Financial Report:		Bank Reconciliation at 28/06/2023	
Cash in Hand	01/04/2023	£	70,902.41
ADD			
Receipts	01/04/2023 - 28/06/2023	£	90,139.62
		£	161,042.03
SUBTRACT			
Payments	01/04/2023 - 28/06/2023	£	55,966.51
A	Cash in Hand	28/06/2023	£ 105,075.52 (per Cash Book)
	Cash in hand per Bank Statements		
	Petty Cash	28/06/2023	£ 5.66
	Events Account	28/06/2023	£ 7,608.92
	Current Account 2 (Reserve)	28/06/2023	£ 102,596.54
	Current Account	28/06/2023	£ 0.00
		£	110,211.12
B	Less unrepresented payments	£	5,135.60
	Plus unrepresented receipts	£	0.00
	Adjusted Bank Balance	£	105,075.52

Cllr. Powner advised that budgets and expenditure need to be presented as a Flexed Budget report so the Council can see the progress of their budgeting decisions. Cllr. Powner has access to the accounting software and will work with the Clerk to present the next financial budget report.

The finance committee is going to meet monthly.

The Council approved the quarterly financial report – All in favour

30. Items on Notice: No items were on Notice to be discussed

31. Items were received for Information:

a) Closure of the Moorlands Echo Newspaper:

The Clerk read out a letter from Belinda Hargreaves, reporter for the Moorlands Echo. The letter explained about the closure of the Newspaper. She expressed her thanks for the welcome she had always received when attending the Town Council meetings. She also thanked Councillors for all the reports and comments which they had submitted for publication over the years.

Cllr Cawley commented on the current climate of the Printed Press. Newspapers are closing as costs increase and readership declines. He remarked about copies of the Sentinel being delivered to Rhyl during the Potters fortnight due to the newspaper's popularity. People can read copies of the publications on the web. With the loss of the newspaper the public are losing the coverage of decisions that local government make and the coverage of Government news. Plus, the information of events and stories from Villages and Communities around the Moorlands. There is still a demand for public news.

Cllr. Wales responded that Cllr. Cawley makes a valid point that people in elected office need to be scrutinized. There will no longer be members of the press present to report on the council's work and actions. Press reporting has made sure that the council are transparent in their decision making in the past.

The Council resolved to write to Belinda Hargreaves to wish her well and to thank her for her fairness and thorough coverage of Town Council meetings and events.

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31. Items for information for future agendas:

Neighbourhood Plan:

Cllr. Hilyer requested as a new Councillor, that he would like to have site of the Neighbourhood Plan so that he could understand the current position. He requested to then have the Neighbourhood Plan on the September Meeting Agenda.

Cllr. Wales asked the Chairman if the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee Mrs. Lesley Roberts could speak. Mrs Roberts reported that the draft plan will not be available next week. The Neighbourhood Plan Committee is meeting with the Planning Consultant soon, and by the September meeting the Chair and the Planning Consultant will come to make a presentation to the Town Council. Members of the Public and the Town Council will then have time to comment. Changes can then be made before the final document is submitted for referendum.

On behalf of the NP Committee Lesley thanked the Clerk for helping the committee to organise meetings.

Cllr. Hilyer asked to see a draft before the end of July. A heated discussion ensued about the status of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee and the time it has taken to produce the Plan. It was clarified that the Neighbourhood Plan Committee is not a Council Committee. The Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee expressed how there has been a lot of information to collect and that the previous council administration had not helped with this.

Two members of the public left the meeting.

Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst suggested asking for advice from the District Council. A request could be made to the Neighbourhood Plan Committee to view the draft plan in confidentiality with the understanding that it is still work in progress.

Cllr. Wales requested that an apology is sent to Mrs. Roberts

The Chairman asked if the Clerk has had sight of the report, which she had.

Cllr. Wales confirmed that the clerk should not be sharing the plan at this stage and had purely been assisting with administration tasks of organising meetings.

32. Exclusion of the Public: The Chairman moved: “That in accordance with section 19 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 by reason of the confidential nature of the business next to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the Meeting”.

All remaining members of the public left the meeting.

Cllr Worthington and Wales also left at 20.08

33. Bank House – Confidential Item

A report was given by Cllr M. Swindlehurst and Cllr. Powner about the current negotiations with potential tenants of Bank House. No decisions were made.

Meeting ended 20.18