

LEEK TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Town Council held Tuesday 17th October 2023

Mayor: Cllr. M. Swindlehurst

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

12 members of the public were in attendance plus The Chair of Leek Neighbourhood Plan Committee Lesley Roberts and Dave Chetwyn, Planning Consultant from Urban Vision. Minutes - D. Wheat, Town Clerk

34. Welcome: The Mayor, Cllr. M. Swindlehurst opened the meeting and welcomed the Councillors and members of the public.

35. Apologies: Cllr. D. Young,

36. Minutes of the Town Council held on 19th September 2023 were received, approved, and signed as an accurate record by the Mayor, Cllr. M. Swindlehurst

Cllr. Wales - Point of order: take exception to the notation 'vexatious' comment. Comment noted.

Proposed – Cllr. Hoptroff - Seconded- Cllr. Webster – 9 in favour 2 against

37. Minutes of the General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 19th September 2023 and the additional meeting held on 29th August were noted and approved.

Proposed Cllr. Hilyer - Seconded Cllr. Birch - 9 in favour – 2 abstain

38. Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Tuesday 29th August and 19th September were approved

Proposed- Cllr. Webster – Seconded Cllr. Birch

39. Leek Mayor Report Sept 2023

The Mayor has attended a number of Civic events, and will be attending the Civic Service for Cheadle Town Mayor Cllr. Elizabeth Whitehouse.

The Mayor commented how proud he is of Leek for it's fame for music. Recently a Leek musician played in Nashville at the Grand Old Opry and another musician is performing at the Albert Hall in the near future.

40. Announcements:

Leek has been awarded the 'Certificate of Fairtrade' award for the town's engagement with Fairtrade.

41. The meeting was adjourned for the Public Participation session:

A resident had submitted the following questions to the council:

i. Considering the fact that the department for Transport will be issuing guidance on limiting local council powers to introduce blanket 20mph zones in response to the fury over them in Wales over the last few weeks, why are Leek Town Councillors so incentivized to persist in pursuing this locally when it is a nationally unpopular scheme?

Cllr. M. Swindlehurst responded that he had every confidence that the County Council will act at all times within the powers ascribed to it by national government. He commented that there was not any real connection between a national scheme such as Wales. Leek residents are being given the opportunity to express their views on suitable speed limits within the various areas of the town.

ii. Why has the motion of a traffic review (which would be widely supported) been combined with the unpopular proposed Leek-wide 20mph restriction zone, which most would not support? An online poll running in a Leek community Social media page received 640 votes against blanket 20mph zones in Leek and 49 votes in support.

The Chairman Cllr. M. Swindlehurst responded that the council are merely debating that the introduction of 20mph zones could be considered as part of a wider review. Social media was discussed as not being used as evidence and that a full public consultation would need to take place.

Cllr. Worthington asked if he could respond to the resident. The Mayor stated that the original question was addressed to the Chairman, so this was why he had responded.

- 42a) Guest speakers: Ms. Lesley Roberts – Chair of the Leek Neighbourhood Plan Committee,** gave an overview of the progress that the NP Committee have made with the Plan including the content of a requirement for quality Housing and Design.

Mr. Dave Chetwyn from Planning Consultants ‘Urban Vision’ then gave a presentation of the work done so far and the aims of making a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Town Council is the qualifying body to authorize submission of the Neighbourhood Plan. When a N.P. is completed, it carries weight in planning decisions, it should work alongside and complement the Local Plan. The planning committee needs to take both documents into consideration. It should be a plan for growth.

Once the Plan is approved by the Town and District councils it goes out to a public referendum. This will be publicized, and copies will be available for view in various public places and online for six weeks. All comments will be considered and implemented from this statutory consultation. It then goes through another regulation which is a legal process of examination to make sure it meets legal requirements. It has to meet criteria for sustainable development and environmental habitat considerations.

Biddulph’s Plan is currently at this stage. They have been working on their plan since 2018. Other Parishes in the District are still in progress with their plans.

Cllr. L. Swindlehurst was interested in the concept of developing the town centre as a residential area. This will affect tourism and business. Developing the town centre as a living space. For example if a three story building used for business, the third story could be offered as a residential space. The re-population of a Town Centre seems to be a critical factor in making a town succeed. This would also improve active travel in a town centre making the town viable and giving vitality in the business centre.

Cllr. Cawley commented that there has been a body of work done identifying public access to Green Spaces around Leek and issues concerned with access, and Public Rights of Way which should be included.

Mr. Chetwyn, responded that one of the themes being incorporated in the policies within the Plan is the green infrastructure and green spaces. Pedestrian connectivity and route accessibility within the town centre spaces. To enhance green spaces would need a supplementary document to be produced.

Ms. Roberts then explained the work done by Aecom who are Planning Design consultants and talked about creating essential greenspace for recreation withing any development proposals. The Leek plan is now at the stage of Screening.

Cllr. L. Swindlehurst commented on the adopted Local Plan. New housing is essential, if councils don’t make space for development, then central government will choose where developments will take place on Staffordshire Moorland’s behalf.

Mr. Chetwyn responded that there is disagreement Nationally on housing delivery. The National Policy is set out in the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework). Leek N.P is a good opportunity to add more information linking to the Local Plan to add localized detail to the national framework.

Cllr. Hoptroff, member of SMDC Planning Application Committee commented that this document will make a difference to Planning in Leek and looks forward to seeing its completion.

Cllr. Wales clarified that the Neighbourhood Plan Committee is not a Town Council Committee:

The Chair of the Leek Neighbourhood Planning Committee Lesley Robert thanked everyone for listening.

Thanks were given by the Chair Cllr. L. Swindlehurst to Mr. Chetwyn of Urban Vision Planning Consultants for giving the presentation.

A member of the public asked if she could ask one question regarding when the National Planning Policy will be changing?

The Chair responded that standing orders do not permit public questions at this stage of the meeting.

The Mayor gave thanks to the Neighbourhood Planning Committee for all their work on the Plan so far.

Meeting ended 19.33

Mayor signature.....

Date.....