**MINUTES OF THE ALDEBURGH TOWN COUNCIL**

**MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13 MARCH 2017**

**AT 7:00 PM IN THE MOOT HALL**

Present: Cllr Digby - The Mayor, took the Chair

Cllr Bond Cllr Fellowes

Cllr Fox Cllr Harris

Cllr Kiff Cllr Osben

Cllr Partel Cllr Palmer

Cllr Worster

Cllr Richard Smith – SCC and Cllrs T.J Haworth-Culf and M. Jones – SCDC were present. Eleven members

of the public were also in attendance.

**1. Apologies:** Cllrs Jones and Walker

**2. Councillors’ Declaration of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

**3. To Approve the Draft Minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 February 2017.**

Minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 February 2017 were **APPROVED** by a show of handsand duly signed.

**4. SCC report and Correspondence**

Cllr Smith delivered his report on behalf of SCC (see Appendix One.)

Responding to Cllr Smith’s report, Cllr Fellowes asked if the roadway by the Fire Station, which is in a poor state, could be repaired by the County Council.

Cllr Smith said responsibility for the road lay with Aldeburgh Town Council, a fact the Town Clerk confirmed. The Town Clerk said she hoped the County Council might look more favourably on the repair costs because the road supported an emergency vehicle. Cllr Smith promised to look into the matter. Cllr Smith also confirmed he would be stepping down as County Councillor for Aldeburgh at the forthcoming elections. Cllr Worster thanked Cllr Smith for the service he had given the town.

**5. SCDC Report and Correspondence**

Cllr TJ Haworth-Culf submitted the monthly report on behalf of SCDC (see Appendix Two.)

Cllr Kiff welcomed the news that the NHS has launched an initiative to recover unused medical equipment which was a positive move to save money – particularly as charity shops refused to accept crutches and walking frames.

Cllr Fellowes asked if the recent district council merger would result in residents of Aldeburgh having to pay to have brown bins emptied, as they do in Waveney District. Cllr Haworth-Culf said a lot of background work was being done on this matter but, she pointed out, there are now very few councils who do not charge for this service. She promised to report back.

**6.** **Police Report**

No Police Report had been submitted this month, but a full report had been provided at the Town Meeting.

**7.** **PUBLIC FORUM**

**The Mayor suspended Standing Orders for the Public Forum.**

Mr Peter Cox, sitting in the public gallery prior to being co-opted to Aldeburgh Town Council,

asked Cllr Smith why a number of Traffic Regulation Orders had not been approved by the County Council. Mr Cox said the TRO enabling yellow lines to be installed on Church Farm Road also included provision for an extra disabled parking bay outside the Moot Hall and a 30-minute parking zone between O.C.Butchers and the Co-op. He said they were all included in one Order, but these items had disappeared. The Town Clerk confirmed that Mr Cox was correct. Cllr Smith said he did not know the answer to this but promised to investigate.

Speaking about the decision to install yellow lines on Church Farm Road, a resident said that he and at least 40 households objected to these restrictions. He complained about the lack of consultation and site meetings involving residents prior to the decision. He believed the traffic situation on Church Farm Road would be eased if the owner of the caravan park agreed to use another entrance. He called on Aldeburgh Town Council to support the delay of the implementation of the yellow lines until a full and proper consultation had taken place. Cllr Smith responded by saying the decision had been made and there was no reason to delay its implementation.

Cllr Kiff stated that the Town Council had voted unanimously to introduce parking restrictions on Church Farm Road to ease chronic traffic problems. He also offered to talk to residents at a later stage.

Another resident also objected to the apparent lack of consultation over this scheme. He disputed assertions that houses on Church Farm Road had ample off-street parking and said that traffic speed would increase as a result of the yellow lines, parked cars, rather than having a traffic-calming effect. He added there was no need for 24/7 parking restrictions.

Cllr Smith said due process was applied at all stages of this scheme, which would be reviewed in 12 months’ time.

Cllr Fox said that Aldeburgh Town Council had acted in good faith in trying to sort out the chaos on Church Farm Road. She pointed out that there was a very large car park at the end of the road which people were reluctant to use because they would have to pay. The resident commented that even if the highways authorities now had the power to install yellow lines, there was nothing in law which said they had to. The scheme could be reduced, he believed.

At this point another resident asked if he could speak about the impending closure of the Aldeburgh Playgroup. He was advised this topic would be raised under Correspondence, when he would be permitted to address the Town Council.

**The Mayor reinstated Standing Orders**

**COMMITTEES REPORTS:**

**8a. PROPERTY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**8ai) Report from Chairman of Property & Finance Committee**

In the absence of the Chairman, Cllr Osben reported that work on the new kitchen at The Moot Hall would soon start, that new dog bins with bag dispensers were to be installed at various points on the sea front and Jubilee Walk and renovation work on the Moot Hall should be complete by May. She added that quotations to replace playground equipment at King’s Field were being sought.

**8aii) RESOLUTION** to **APPROVE** expenditure to enable Hoggs to carry out restorative work on The Moot Hall. **PROPOSED** by Cllr Harris and **SECONDED** by Cllr Bond.

**In Favour 10**

**Against 0**

**Abstentions 0**

**Carried UNANIMOUSLY**

**8aiii) RESOLUTION** to **APPROVE** the Asset Register for 2015/16.

**PROPOSED** by Cllr Kiff and **SECONDED** by Cllr Fox.

**In Favour 9**

**Against 0**

**Abstentions 1**

**CARRIED**

The Town Clerk reported that Cllr Jones was investigating the possibility of converting the tractor shed at King’s Field into a fitness centre. Fees for the initial investigation of the proposed plan should not exceed £3,000. The potential tenant of this building had agreed to underwrite the financial risk and take full responsibility for this expenditure

**RESOLUTION** to **APPROVE** spending of up to £3,000 in professional fees for the redevelopment of a building on King’s Field.

**PROPOSED** by Cllr Worster and **SECONDED** by Cllr Palmer.

**In Favour 9**

**Against 0**

**Abstentions 1**

**CARRIED**

Cllr Fox asked the Town Council to consider taking over responsibility for the town’s summer floral displays from the Aldeburgh Business Association. She said the ABA would continue to organise and pay for the town’s Christmas lights but could no longer look after the hanging baskets and floral displays. She felt this was something the Town Council should take over. The Town Clerk stated that due to sponsorship, this plan should be virtually cost-neutral. Cllr Worster pointed out that many town councils take responsibility for the provision of hanging baskets. It was very important, he added, the town looked as good as possible for residents and visitors.

**RESOLUTION** to **APPROVE** that Aldeburgh Town Council takes full responsibility for the town’s floral displays **PROPOSED** by Cllr Worster and **SECONDED** by Cllr Partel.

**In favour 10**

**Against 0**

**Abstentions 0**

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

##### 8b. SERVICES COMMITTEE

**8bi) Report from Chairman of Services**

Cllr Palmer informed ATC that he had been in touch with the War Memorials Trust for advice and funding concerning conservation work on the town’s war memorial. He was also preparing a report for the Council on the possible provision of new automatic defibrillators. He said he was looking into the provision of permanent, solar-powered speed sensors on approach roads into Aldeburgh and was now happy with re-surfacing work on Slaughden Road.

**8c. PLANNING**

**8ci) Report from Chairman of Planning**

Cllr Worster said there were no planning issues this month. Cllr Bond expressed her disappointment the District Council had approved a planning application for 147 High Street, which involved extensive terracing.

**8d. GRANTS, REQUESTS & EVENTS**

**8di) Report from Chairman of Grants, Requests and Events Committee**

Cllr Bond had nothing to report this month.

**8dii)** A resolution to **APPROVE** that ATC makes a donation of £200 for Headway Suffolk, a charity which supports brain-injured people and stroke victims. **PROPOSED** by Cllr Bond and **SECONDED** by Cllr Fox.

**In favour 10**

**Against 0**

**Abstentions 0**

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**9. Co-option of New Councillors**

The Mayor, Cllr Digby, welcomed two new councillors, Elizabeth Oxby and Peter Cox. He invited them to take their seats in the council chamber.

**10. Representatives’ Reports.**

* Cllr Bond with Cllrs Jones & Osben had attended an Aldeburgh Primary School presentation concerning its merger with the Avocet Multi Academy Trust. Together with Cllrs Jones & Digby she had had a satisfactory meeting with the Community Centre Trustees. Cllr Bond, with Cllr Digby had visited a resident of Marsh House to discuss the speed of traffic along the A1094 and with Cllrs Digby and Kiff had attended the Carnival Committee AGM She and various Cllrs attended the annual Town Meeting.
* Cllr Harris chaired a meeting of the Trustees of the Aldeburgh United Charities to sign off the 2016 accounts. He also attended a meeting of the Aldeburgh Museum Trustees.
* Cllr Fox reported on the appointment of a Project Manager to oversee the first stage of the Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the redevelopment of the Moot Hall and the Museum.
* Cllr Kiff had attended a meeting of the Aldeburgh Business Association where, he said, concerns were expressed about business rates in the town. He also attended an EDF presentation regarding Sizewell C.
* Cllr Osben was present at meetings at the Community Centre, Aldeburgh Primary School Trust and the Town Meeting.
* Cllr Palmer attended the launch of the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Outstanding Landscapes Walk Guides. He was also present at the AGM of the Suffolk Coast Against Retreat and an Alde and Ore Partnership meeting in Orford.
* Cllr Fellowes chaired a meeting of the Sizewell Stakeholders Group.
* Cllr Worster attended a meeting of the Crescent Road Residents Association and a meeting of the Trustees of the Jubilee Hall.

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**11. Town Clerk’s Report**

The Town Clerk asked Cllr Smith for help in resolving two long-standing problems – replacement of a black bollard opposite the Moot Hall which was reported two months ago and repair of street lights at West Lane steps, a fault reported three times. She said the delay in fixing both problems was extremely frustrating. Cllr Smith promised to investigate.

The Town Clerk confirmed that internal auditors had carried out an interim audit in preparation for the year-end audit by BDO and she awaited their report. She also told the council that under new EU legislation, all future projects involving expenditure of more than £25,000 would have to be advertised Europe-wide in addition to the usual tendering process.

The Town Clerk called for nominations for the office of Mayor and Deputy Mayor to be received in the office in advance of the next Council meeting.

**12. Mayor’s Notes.**

The Mayor reported that he had been involved in a variety of events and meetings during the past month. These included;

* 24 February – Photographs taken by SCDC at Thorpe Road Car Park.
* 27 February – Attending a meeting with a resident with Cllr Bond.
* 7 March – Chaired Carnival Committee meeting and AGM
* 8 March – Chaired Save the Children AGM
* 9 March – Chaired Annual Town Meeting at the Community Centre
* 11 March – Attended the official opening of The Stables, Aldeburgh
* 12 March – Attended the High Sherriff of Suffolk Courts of Justice Service at St Edmundsbury Cathedral

**13. Correspondence**

The Town Clerk drew the Council’s attention to an email she had recently received highlighting the imminent closure of the Aldeburgh Playgroup. The detailed email, sent by a concerned resident, alleged playgroup staff and parents had been told the group was closing permanently at the end of March. No mention of redundancy pay had been made to staff and OFSTED had not been informed of the closure. The sender of the email said that a total of 18 children were going to be affected by the closure, which would cause great hardship in the town. The email asked if Aldeburgh Town Council could do anything to prevent the closure or provide temporary transport so children could travel to playgroups in neighbouring villages and that it would be a great shame if the playgroup was allowed to close as a lot of working parents in the town rely on it.

Cllr Fellowes, a member of the playgroup committee, made a lengthy statement to the Council clarifying her position. She said that although she was a Town Councillor she did not represent the Council on the playgroup committee and was speaking now as a member of the community. She welcomed this first opportunity to discuss the matter.

She said the playgroup first faced closure 18 months ago and since then everyone had worked hard to keep it alive. But new and more demanding OFSTED requirements had made it very difficult to keep going. She said the playgroup committee had tried to recruit a qualified manager but failed. The committee, she added, had been in talks with Suffolk County Council to see if they could help with staff provision or assistance with transport. Cllr Fellowes said that SCC would like to take over the building but there was an issue about the lease and rental values for a possible new provider.

Cllr Worster asked Cllr Fellowes if she was an officer of the playgroup committee. She said she was a non-associate member of the playgroup committee. When asked to explain what this meant, Cllr Fellowes confirmed she was the Chair and the Treasurer of the Committee.

Cllr Fox wanted to know when the committee decided to close down the playgroup. Cllr Fellowes said the decision had been taken a week ago but said it was no secret that it had been considering its future for a while. Cllr Kiff asked who had decided to close it down. Cllr Fellowes said the decision was taken by the parent-led committee.

Cllr Smith was dumbstruck by this decision. He said it would have been useful to know of the impending closure some while ago rather than a few days before the axe fell. He expressed his fury that discussions appear to have taken place with the County Council about which he knew nothing. He confirmed he knew nothing about the County Council taking over the building and he should have known because this was part of his county council remit. District Councillor T.J.Haworth-Culf had been contacted by worried parents, she told the Council, all in a state of shock.

The Town Clerk said the news had come as a great surprise to everyone and that it was a pity this problem had not been brought to the attention of the Town Council much earlier. Had it been, she said, the Town Council and the County Council could have stepped in to try and provide a solution, rather than being forced into a reactive solution. She explained to Cllr Fellowes that although she had stated that she did not represent the Town Council on the playgroup committee, the distinction between the two roles could not be separated in the eyes of parents and residents; a point made in an email by another resident.

**The Mayor suspended Standing Orders to allow a member of the public to address the meeting**.

A resident complained about the way staff at the playgroup had been treated over the past few months. He accused Cllr Fellowes of ruining the lives of people who work there. He was particularly upset at the manner in which redundancy notice and pay had been handled. He said staff had tried to contact Cllr Fellowes to discuss personnel issues involving the playgroup, but she had not responded to their messages. He concluded by accusing Cllr Fellowes of being guilty of very poor management.

**The Mayor reinstated Standing Orders.**

The Town Clerk said it was obvious emotions were running high over this issue and added that Cllr Bond would try and give support and guidance to anybody associated with the playgroup.

Cllr Harris said he was as shocked as anyone about the news and suggested some time was taken to establish all the facts. Cllr Worster said if bullying was discovered to be an issue in this case, it should be dealt with severely. Cllr Osben pointed out that action to help the playgroup could not be delayed because of the imminent closure date.

Cllr Fellowes said she would work with anyone to try and resolve this matter.

**14. Gifts and/or Hospitality Received by Councillors**

Cllrs had nothing to declare this month.

**15. Items to pay** – details had been previously circulated to Cllrs.

All payments were **PROPOSED FOR APPROVAL**

**PROPOSED** by Cllr Kiff. **SECONDED** by Cllr Harris.

**In Favour 10**

**Against 0**

**Abstentions 0**

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

There being nothing further to discuss the meeting ended at 8.59 pm.

**The next meeting of Aldeburgh Town Council will take place on Monday 10 April 2017 at**

**7.00 pm in The Moot Hall.**