

ATHERSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

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DOCUMENT	MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
VENUE	North Warwickshire Borough Council, Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire, CV9 1DE
DATE AND TIME	Wednesday 16th March 2022 7.00pm
IN ATTENDANCE	Town Councillors: Jordan, Wright, Chambers, Barnett, Wightman, T Clews, D Clews, Henney, Pickard, Bishop Police: None Borough and County Councillors: None Public: G Chamberlain, M Short, G Short, P Henney, S Greenaway, K Manger, K Lewis. Press: None
APOLOGIES	Councillors: P Gurney, Jarvis, Singh, Spencer
CHAIRMAN	Cllr Jordan
CLERK	Odette Ghent Town Clerk

Item		Actions	Notes
	The chairman announced the meeting will be recorded.		
1.	APOLOGIES AND ACCEPTANCE OF REASON OF ABSENCE These were noted.		
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS FOR DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS. DECLARATIONS OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY. It was agreed these would be taken as and when. Cllrs T Clews and Jordan declared an interest in planning. Cllr Henney declared an interest in planning application PAP/2022/0077 41 Sheepy Road Front Porch Cllr Bishop referred Councillors to the guidance notes (B4) in their induction pack relating to disclosable nonpecuniary interests, for councillors that are members of more than one authority.		
	The Chairman spoke with great regret and sadness about the recent sad passing of Cllr Carl Gurney earlier this month. Cllr Carl Gurney was unexpectedly taken from us, and our condolences go out to the family. Anyone wishing to attend Carls funeral it is 23 rd March 2022 1pm at Polesworth Abbey. P103 03/22		

	<p>Cllr Bishop spoke with deep sadness on behalf of the Labour Party of the tragic loss to the Town of Cllr Carl Gurney who was much respected and committed, she paid tribute to all the work Carl did and sends condolences to his family.</p> <p>Cllr D Clews spoke of how Carl put his heart and soul into his work with many organisations, including Civic Society, St Marys Church, and the villages of Mancetter and Polesworth everything done with no recognition.</p> <p>The tributes were followed by one minute silence.</p>		
3.	<p>PUBLIC SESSION (maximum 30 minutes)</p> <p>Public Toilets.</p> <p>Cllr Jordan confirmed the following, Atherstone Town council does not own or manage the public toilets, that responsibility lies with NWBC.</p> <p>In October 2021 ATC were approached by NWBC about the responsibility of taking over the running of the toilets. Subsequently ATC were provided with reports about the state of the building, upgrades required, and a site visit took place.</p> <p>At the 8th December 2021 ATC full council meeting it was decided not to put the burden of the public toilets into the Town Councils hand and this remains the position of ATC.</p> <p>Mr Short read out a report regarding the public toilets see appendix A at the end of the report.</p> <p>Cllr Bishop noted that her Town Councillors report refers to the public toilets.</p> <p>Cllr Henney reported he fully supports the campaign to keep the public toilets open and feels he has a duty to speak up on behalf of the people he represents.</p> <p>Cllr Pickard agreed with Cllr Henney comments and also feels the Town Councillors own the responsibility to represent the people that elected them.</p> <p>Cllr Chambers agreed the Town Council were approached by NWBC about the future funding for the running of the public toilets, but were not, nor were local businesses, Atherstone Partnership, the bus station and taxi firms formally consulted about the impact on the residents, visitors and businesses relating to the closure of the public toilets. She supports delaying the closure of the toilets.</p> <p>P104 03/22</p>		

M.P. 

Cllr Wright thanked the public for their comments and confirmed he had spoken to a number of the campaigners prior to the meeting and would refer them to the decision-making body being NWBC. As leader of NWBC Cllr Wright declared an interest in this matter. Cllr Wright stated he would like to correct some factual errors that have been quoted, he confirmed that there was no statutory obligation to consult which has been confirmed by the NWBC. He also pointed out that there are other public toilets available in Atherstone at the memorial hall, leisure centre and NWBC building.

Cllr Wright also expressed his bemusement at the sudden opposition to the closure of the public toilets and pointed out that at the NWBC resources board meeting held on 24th January 2022 the recommendation to close them was discussed and approved and there was no opposition at all.

There have been discussions for the last 12 months regarding the closure of the public toilets not the demolition of them that has been mis quoted.

The recommendation was to close them on 1st April 2022 in tandem to that to consult with businesses and interested parties to take them on, consultations have been taking place and making good progress.

Cllr D Clews declared an interest as a member of the NWBC resources board and reminded Borough Councillors who would have been aware of this matter being discussed at resources board in January 202 and whom could have passed on this information to Town Councillors who could have then informed local residents that could have attended the meeting.

Cllr Barnett confirmed the first he knew about the potential closure was in late 2021 when the Town council were asked if they wanted to take over the running of the public toilets. This was not in the minutes as the request from NWBC was for this matter to be kept in P&C. He expressed his concern that the resolution at resources board the resolution was for the director of streetscape to do as he wished with them.

Cllr Jordan confirmed that at the Town Council meeting on 8th December 2021 all Town Councillors were made aware of the implications of their decision not to take on them on would be closure on 1st April 2022

Mr Short questioned the no obligation to consult as quoted by Cllr Wright.

Cllr Chamberlain (GC) reported there had been an Atherstone Partnership (AP) meeting on Tuesday 15th March 2022 which was well attended.

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Items discussed:

- New treasurer was appointed.
- Website - sharing of information with other bodies, in particular for Market Square bookings they can be advertised via the AP website. ATC to add contact details to the Market Square booking form.
- New parking regulations, clarity is required as to the new regulations relating to Long Street, WCC have agreed to send details to GC
- Public toilets – AP will write to NWBC requesting postponement of the closure until a suitable replacement can be found as it will have a detrimental effect on the businesses and footfall in the town, especially due to bad timing with the new parking restrictions just being implemented.
- AP dates for the diary 30th June to 3rd July 2022 – Beer Festival, 3rd to 4th December 2022 – Christmas Market.

PAP/2022/0077 41 Sheepy Road Front Porch

A resident from Sheepy Road spoke regarding this planning application which has not yet been determined by NWBC yet is 80% complete.

The current construction varies from the original plans, revised plans have been submitted which are not in keeping with the street scheme.

The resident has spoken to the case office and the owners have been asked to stop building but not done so, and they requested that ATC report this to the planning board.

Queens Platinum Jubilee – the event management plan was sent to ATC prior to the meeting, Ken Manager and Keith Lewis the organisers updated the meeting on the 4-day event from Thursday 2nd June to Sunday 5th June 2022.

Funding and sponsorship are being sourced.

Brief details:

Thursday 2nd June Town Crier to undertake the 'Proclamation' Anker Radio, Tree planting, Oom-pah band, Piper and Bugle call.

Friday 3rd June Showcase Atherstone, all local organisations and clubs are invited into the Market Square letting people know what goes on around the Town.

Saturday 4th June –Big Screen showing the events from the Palace and children's entertainment.

Sunday 5th June – Big Lunch and children's entertainment.

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4.	<p>REPORTS FROM POLICE, COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILLORS as per written reports.</p> <p><u>Police reports</u></p> <p>No report this month</p> <p><u>County Councillor Report</u></p> <p>No reports</p> <p><u>NWBC Councillor Reports</u></p> <p>No reports</p>		
5.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING OF 16th February 2022</p> <p>It was resolved to approve the minutes proposed Cllr Wright seconded Cllr Wightman</p>		
6.	<p>MATTERS ARISING FROM THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING OF 16th February 2022.</p> <p>P100 item 18a to be discussed in P&C – Cllr Jordan</p>		
7.	<p>INVOICES FOR APPROVAL AND CHEQUES FOR SIGNATURE</p> <p>The following cheques to be ratified 109285-109286</p> <p>Approval for all new cheques 109287 -109306</p> <p>It was resolved to approve the list. Proposed Cllr T Clews seconded by Cllr Chambers</p> <p>Cheques over £500 listed below</p> <p>Wages £3,825.42 WCC £1,227.46 HMRC £ 3,722.18 BNP Paribas £541.20 Saltem £1,693.20</p> <p>P107 03/22</p>		

M.P.S. -

8.	<p>PLANNING</p> <p>Cllrs Jordan and T Clews declared an interest in planning.</p> <p>Cllr Henney declared an interest in PAP/2022/0077</p> <p>a) Planning Lists – 4,5,6,7,8</p> <p>b) Consultations</p> <p>PAP 2021/0155 Peel House, 79 Witherley Road. Extension and alterations to existing dwelling and construct new dwelling with access off Nursery Rd. Objection due to insufficient parking Proposed Cllr D Clews seconded Cllr Barnett</p> <p>PAP/2021/0432 & 0433 Mark Webster and Co 131 Long St Atherstone Residential development of 2 two bed coach dwellings with assoc external works and demolition of existing garage. Objection due to over intensification Proposed Cllr Bishop seconded Cllr Barnett</p> <p>PAP/2021/0625 91 Stratford Avenue Erection of single storey front porch and two storey rear extension. No objection if acceptable to neighbours</p> <p>PAP/2021/0679 Garden Row rear of 70-72 Church St Retain 6 dwellings following renovation and refurbishment. No objection if acceptable to neighbours</p> <p>PAP/2022/0077 41 Sheepy Road Front Porch Objection as the appearance is not in keeping with the neighbouring properties, street scheme also noted that the building has proceeded without determination and not as the original plans also not yet determined. Proposed Cllr Bishop seconded Cllr Barnett</p> <p>c) Decisions: -</p> <p>See attached weekly lists decisions highlighted – 4,5,6,7,8</p> <p>d) Other Planning Matters</p>		
9.	<p>CORRESPONDENCE</p> <p>P1. ATC to write a letter of appreciation to the Sheepy Ploughing Association thanking them for the money raised at the Tractor Run on 10th December 2021</p> <p>P108 03/22</p>		

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	<p>E8 – Cllr Bishop referred to the Greenshoots funding available as mentioned in the Warwickshire Matters email.</p> <p>E14 – Public toilets – Cllr Barnett pointed out that the cost of £15 per visit quoted was incorrect, this was confirmed to be incorrect by Cllr Wright</p> <p>E15 – Cllr Bishop mentioned young people should be encouraged to get involved with fruit tree planting, gardening and growing their own food, could ATC contact the local schools suggesting this. Cllr D Clews supported this idea as has seen this happen in other areas where locals can pick the locally grown produce.</p>		
10.	<p>MARKET SQUARE</p> <p>Events booked on the Market Square</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beer Festival 30th June to 3rd July 2022 • Queens Platinum Jubilee 2nd to 5th June 2022 • Badgers 10k 28th August 2022 • Christmas Market 3rd to 4th December 2022 		
11.	<p>WCC ART CHALLENGE PROJECT UPDATE</p> <p>Cllr Chambers reported the feedback via WCC/Atherstone Partnership is that the art project in the bus station area will commence around May 2022.</p>		
12.	<p>DICKENS FIREWORKS</p> <p>To be discuss later in Private and Confidential</p>		
13.	<p>WRITTEN REPORTS</p> <p>a. Town Clerk’s Report – this was noted.</p> <p>b. Deputy Clerk’s Report - this was noted.</p> <p>Bench repainting – awaiting more details from the community payback team, this will be added to April 2022 agenda.</p> <p>Cllr Chambers thanked the Deputy Clerk for the work she has put in arranging the Ruby Chambers Sports Award which will presented on Friday 18th March 2022 at the Atherstone Sports Club.</p> <p>c. Finance (Town Clerk) this was noted.</p> <p>d. Town Councillors Reports</p> <p>Cllr Bishop submitted her report prior to the meeting regarding the Public Toilets, the results of the online survey have been collated.</p> <p>P109 03/22</p>		

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Over 81% of people that submitted their feedback online live in Atherstone and 93% of total responses want to keep the toilets open.

The recommendation made was to write to NWBC as below.

Atherstone Town Council is extremely disappointed that North Warwickshire Borough Council has decided to close the Station Street Public Toilets on April 1st and that this decision was taken without either public consultation or assessing the impact of this closure on people who travel by bus, bus drivers, the elderly, the disabled, or vulnerable people whose mobility may be impaired, as well as the impact on local trade and business owners.

We urge the Borough Council to delay the closure of these toilets until such time as there are alternative plans for the continued provision of a public toilet by the bus station and improved signposting of alternative, accessible, free toilet facilities elsewhere in the town.

This recommendation was agreed, proposed Cllr Bishop seconded Cllr Chambers, with an amendment to also recognise the email sent to NWBC from the Atherstone Partnership.

e. Cemetery Reports (Deputy Clerk)

The gravedigger has asked if he can replace a piece of the palisade fence with a palisade gate at the bottom of the cemetery to allow access into the old allotment gardens to deposit excess soil from burials, this was approved proposed Cllr T Clews seconded Cllr Wright.

Baby burial section, there was a discussion about a new baby section, an area was agreed on the right-hand side below the current location, this will be fenced off to avoid cars parking too close, proposed Cllr D Clews seconded Cllr Wright.

Damaged headstone – a family has reported there is damage to their headstone. As no contractors have been working near to the plot it was resolved to write to the family and advise them that on this occasion this will not be repaired by ATC proposed Cllr Henney seconded Cllr Wright.

Recent Burials in Atherstone Cemetery

Maureen Wakefield	B283	new out of parish plot
Neil Moore	B139	re open out of parish – single depth
Raymond Hobbins	E953	re open double depth
Fay Clay	B275	new triple plot
Janet Cheshire	A393	re open for ashes

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	<p>Recent Memorials</p> <p>Bernard Boulstridge RCE1141 – headstone and kerbs Frederick Gilbert additional inscription Frederick Neale addition inscription</p> <p>f. Allotment Report (Deputy Clerk) – this was noted</p> <p>Allotment awards 2022 – these to be held Tuesday 12th July 2022</p> <p>Merevale allotment site 6pm to 7:30pm Gypsy Lane allotment site 7:30pm to 8:30pm</p> <p>Cllr Wightman offered to join the allotment judging group.</p> <p>g. Play Areas Report (Deputy Clerk) this was noted.</p> <p>h. Arcade report – this was noted.</p> <p>i. Arcade Working Group feedback. Nothing to report Cllr Bishop asked for a working group meeting to be arranged.</p>		
	<p>PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL</p> <p>It was resolved that, under Section 100A of the local Government Act 1972, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted being.</p> <p>2. Accommodation, services or financial assistance provided by the Council to an individual.</p> <p>3. Details of the terms of contracts for the acquisition or disposal of property, or for the supply of goods and services.</p> <p>It is advisable in the public interest, as if members of the public were present during the consideration of such business, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under paragraphs 1 and 11 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act, that the public be temporarily excluded, and they are instructed to withdraw.</p> <p>Proposed Cllr Wright seconded Cllr T Clews</p>		
12.	<p>DICKENS FIREWORKS – cancellation to high winds.</p> <p>Email dialogue to continue regarding the out-of-pocket expenses claimed by the contractors, proof of these required and clarification that ATC who they claim are the client, did not cancel the firework display, but they took instructions from a third party. The fireworks could be used for the next Dickens event.</p> <p>P111 03/22</p>		

M.P.S .

14.	<p>TOWN COUNCIL DINNER & HONORARY CITIZEN AWARD</p> <p>The arrangements and venue yet to be confirmed. It was agreed to give delegated powers to the clerks in agreement with the chairman to finalise arrangements in line with budgeted costs, proposed Cllr T Clews seconded Cllr Bishop.</p>		
15.	<p>MEREVALE VIEW/Allotment site trees</p> <p>During the high winds in February a tree from Merevale allotment site came down and damaged a car, as this is classed as an act of God ATC to write to the resident and advise accordingly that they are to claim off their own insurance proposed Cllr Henney seconded Cllr Barnett.</p> <p>Trees general, it was resolved to write to the chosen tree contractor to get a timetable/timescale of the work agreed, proposed Cllr Jordan seconded Cllr T Clews.</p>		
16.	<p>QUOTATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Arcade fuse board replacement, the quote from Paul Parker was approved proposed Cllr Bishop seconded Cllr Henney. b. Arcade fire exit bulkheads – the Clerk to confirm the number of bulkheads that need replacing and add back to next month's agenda. c. TREES (update Barnsley Close) this is ongoing d. ASBESTOS the quote from Enviro safe was approved proposed Cllr Henney seconded Cllr Bishop e. Perspex for honours board the quote from The Printing Shed was approved proposed Cllr Jordan seconded Cllr Henney. 		
17.	<p>ACCOMMODATION – Old Mortuary</p> <p>It was resolved to hold a working group meeting to discuss this further proposed Cllr Jordan seconded Cllr T Clews</p>		
18.	<p>EMPLOYMENT</p> <p>NJC pay increase it was resolved to approve the 1.75% pay award with effect from 1st April 2021, proposed Cllr Barnett seconded Cllr Bishop</p> <p>P112 03/22</p>		

M. J. S.

19.	CCTV The next Partnership meeting is Thursday 7 th April 2022		
	The meeting closed at 9:30pm the next meeting is Wednesday 20th April 2022		

Signed  Chairman of Atherstone Town Council

Appendix 1

Statement read out by Martin Short during the public session.

I'm very concerned that the issue currently most preoccupying Atherstone residents, namely the closing of the Station Street public toilets, only appears on tonight's agenda under correspondence, even though it's very urgent, bearing in mind that the Borough Council proposes to close them on 1st April. It may be that councillors regard the matter as dealt with, but it has to be considered that the Borough's decision was not taken correctly, bearing in mind that there was no public consultation, an essential stage in line with the Nolan Principles, nor with the bus and coach companies, whose drivers and passengers need to use the toilets, nor with the cafes and pubs that were indicated as welcoming alternatives, and that due consideration was not given to the impact on people with disabilities and others covered by equalities legislation. I'm not aware of the Town Council being consulted either. It's also worth bearing in mind that one of the main things we heard about in relation to the decision was that the toilets were costing £15 a visit, a figure that we now know from one of the Borough Council officers was based on the usage and cost figures for automatic toilets which were elsewhere in the Borough in 2015. In fact, the taxi firms, who are within sight of the toilets all day, confirm that the toilets are very well used, as do bus station users. The other claim made at the Resources Board that there have been "serious drug misuse and problems of antisocial behaviour" in these toilets and used to justify the decision to close these toilets also does not appear to be substantiated by actual data.

It's clear that this is an issue for large numbers of people, with three different campaigns going on, namely, an online Labour Party campaign, consultation conducted by Labour Town councillors and myself and a community-based campaign (CRAP), organised by Mike Pitts. All of these groups have collected data in different ways but tell the same basic story, namely that these toilets are an absolute necessity.

These are just a few quotes from conversations we have had with bus-station users: -

"When you're dying for a wee 10 feet is a long way to go, let alone walk another 100 yards

"I can't afford to buy a coffee every time I want the loo."

"I think it's a bloody cheek to ask cafes to provide toilets for people who just want to use their loos."

And from the cafes:

"No, we won't let people just come in here and use our toilets. We have a clear policy that only diners can use our toilets and we will turn them away."

"The Council should keep them open. We have a notice on the toilet door which says that these toilets are for our customers only. We will turn people away

With only a couple of weeks to go before the toilets are supposed to close and with, as far as I can ascertain, no map of supposed readily available alternative facilities, with opening times, It is essential that Town Councillors do something at this meeting to address the issues and do so in a way that demonstrates that, even if they are also Borough Councillors, they remember that they are elected to fight for the interests of our town. Incidentally, past experience tells us that this council likes to move anything that is at all contentious into private session. Any attempt to do so on this occasion would not just be inappropriate, it would be shameful. Local people need to know how the Council will tackle this concern on their behalf.

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M. D. J.