

# ***Coleshill Town Council***

Meeting of the **COLESHILL TOWN COUNCIL** held in the Old Courtroom, Town Hall, High Street, Coleshill on **WEDNESDAY, 15 JUNE 2016** at 7:00 p.m.

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PRESENT: - Cllr. Wallace, Town Mayor, in the Chair.

Councillors: - Battle, Breeze, Farrell, Farrow, Jones, Mason, Richardson, Taylor and Wootton.

## **16/21 APOLOGIES**

No apologies were received – all members present.

## **16/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Personal interests were declared by Cllrs. Farrell, Farrow and Wootton on 16/33 as they were trustees of the Coleshill Community Partnership.

## **16/23 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 18 MAY 2016**

These were proposed to be adopted by Cllr. Richardson, seconded by Cllr. Wootton and **ACCEPTED** by those present, without amendment.

## **16/24 COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED SINCE THE LAST MEETING OR GIVEN BY THE MAYOR**

The Mayor had been pleased to hear of the good reports from other local authorities about the way her predecessor, Cllr. Wootton had represented Coleshill Town Council and built up a high level of respect with civic heads.

Since taking office, the Mayor continued to have limited enjoyment of the role due to sciatica. However, it had not stopped her attendance at a meeting hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire to discuss the honours system. It was felt that Warwickshire people had been under-represented in awards made. The local public were asked to consider nominations of people who had made significant contributions to community lives, particularly where it was made in more than one field of involvement.

On the civic side, she had helped to host the Mayor of Chassieu on his first visit to Coleshill, together with a party of 30. On one date recently she had attended a St. Mary's Church, Warwick service in the morning and another in the afternoon at Coventry Cathedral. She was pleased to note that, although the Bishop of Coventry had delivered the sermons at both services, they were different texts. On 18 June, the Mayor was due to attend the Warwickshire Cubs 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary camp.

## **16/25 PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC**

Ms. Beth Robinson gave part of the speech she had expected to deliver at the last Town Council meeting but had not been permitted. On behalf of the Carnival Committee, she

would have requested financial assistance with walkie-talkies, support tent, toilet facilities and security fencing but other arrangements were now under discussion. Ms. Robinson asked for Council support of the Carnival, even if it was not to be financial. She expressed her disappointment at the May meeting in that she was inexperienced in council matters, was not aware of when to speak but was expected to be called.

The Mayor responded with a personal apology that she was not aware that Ms. Robinson was due to be called as her name did not feature on the agenda. She added that all members of Council were pledged to support the event and give time voluntarily. Ms. Robinson enquired whether members of council would be prepared to be judges for the Royal Court positions. The Mayor asked for the committee to pass the details to the **Town Clerk** in order to be circulated and thus enlist judges.

Mr. Henry Twigge asked for the Town Council's view on the planning application for 30 houses off the A446 at Grimstock Hill. Cllr. Farrell expressed concerns on the highway safety in relation to the proposed road junction with the busy A446. The Town Clerk advised that the application had already been considered by the Planning Committee and matters of highway safety were raised on its consultee response. Cllr. Jones declared an interest in that he would be reserving his view until hearing all the evidence at the Borough Planning Board but that he would nonetheless be requesting a site visit.

#### **16/26 TO APPROVE THE PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the Community and Environment Committee meetings of 25 May were proposed by Cllr. Farrell, seconded by Cllr. Jones and **AGREED** to be adopted. Those of the Resources and Amenities Committee of 8 June were proposed by Cllr. Richardson and seconded by Cllr. Breeze and **ADOPTED** with the amendment to Item 8 that it was members of Council (not the public) who had been expressing concerns at the current level of Town Council spending.

The minutes of the Planning Committee meetings of 1 June were proposed by Cllr. Richardson and seconded by Cllr. Farrell and then **AGREED** nem. con. The **Town Clerk** was asked to confirm with Cllr. Fowler whether he would attend the 6 July or 3 August Planning Committee meetings to discuss the suggested pelican crossing, as members of the public wished to attend the appropriate meeting.

#### **16/27 INTERNAL AUDITOR'S 15/16 REPORT LETTER**

The Town Clerk and Records Assistant were commended by all for the clean report on the 15/16 internal auditor's letter and for the notably high quality of internal controls.

Ms. Dianne Malley had highlighted that the external auditor might remark that the CCLA Property Fund should be listed as an asset rather than a bank balance and that its current worth should show changes in unit prices. The **Town Clerk** was to change the presentation of the Property Fund on the reporting statements but would also monitor the external auditor's comments.

The report was **NOTED**.

#### **16/28 APPOINTMENT OF MS. DIANE MALLEY AS INTERNAL AUDITOR**

The Mayor was aware of Ms. Dianne Malley's experience and had no hesitation in recommending her as a MAAT qualified auditor. Cllr. Jones proposed and Cllr.

Richardson seconded the appointment of Ms. Malley for the 16/17 internal audit. This was **CARRIED** unanimously.

#### 16/29 **EXTERNAL AUDIT RETURN FOR 2015/16**

The Town Clerk had prepared and circulated the draft external audit return for 2015/16 end of year.

Cllr. Jones asked if the change in value for fixed assets from the previous to the current figure was down to one particular asset. The Town Clerk advised that were many fixed assets from buildings to bus shelters. Some were appreciated and some depreciated in value and so the total was always likely to change in total. They were accounting valuations and not connected to the bank balances which were current assets. It was proposed by Cllr. Wootton, seconded Cllr. Farrell and **RESOLVED** that the Mayor be authorised to sign the Audit Return document.

#### 16/30 **REVIEW OF THE SUPPLY OF UTILITIES**

In 2014, the Town Clerk had discussed electricity and gas contracts with a broker and achieved a two-year contract for the supply of electricity to save over £2,000 per year.

The Town Clerk has commenced discussion again with a broker (Utilities Advice Bureau) on the various different suppliers and lengths of agreements available. For all the electricity supply, the British Gas two year contract presented an annual saving of £108.28. For all gas, the Gazprom two year contract offered an annual saving of £1,029.92. Utilities Advice Bureau advised that it had been warned that British Gas was putting its rates after 3 June.

It was possible to pre-agree an October contract at the June prices, if agreed before the rate change in June. The Town Clerk sought the agreement with the Chairman of Resources and Amenities Committee to contract for two year deals on both electricity and gas as above. The annual spend across all of electricity and gas supplies last year was £11,895.57. A two year fixed contract for both electricity and gas as above gives annual spend for the next two years of £10,757.37 (a decrease of 10%). The Town Clerk was thanked for his diligence in pursuing these savings and the report was **NOTED**.

#### 16/31 **MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Mayor echoed the benefit of the training delivered by Mr. John Crossling, WALC Officer, on this subject at the April training event.

The Town Clerk identified that members were in compliance with the written submission of “disclosable pecuniary interests” to the Borough Council Monitoring Officer and had been doing so correctly for some while. The Council also operated the principle of declaring “prejudicial” and “personal” interests at meetings. However, it had evidently not formally adopted a Code of Conduct which described the different forms of interest and the actions to be taken. He had drafted a code based on the NALC model but added descriptions of actions appropriate for disclosable pecuniary, prejudicial and personal interests.

The draft code was proposed by Cllr. Farrell, seconded Cllr. Richardson and **ADOPTED** unanimously, to take effect from 15 July. The **Town Clerk** was to design a declaration form to allow “Appendix A” and “Appendix B” interests to be completed. Cllr. Farrell

asked if the declaration forms were to be made publically available on the Town Council website. No member had any objection and so this was to be arranged.

#### 16/32 **IMPROVING MEMORIAL PARK – WORKING GROUP**

It was proposed by Cllr. Taylor that the Working Group for Improving Memorial Park should be comprised of the Mayor in Office and the chairmen of Community and Environment and Resources and Amenities Committees. This was seconded by Cllr Farrow. Cllr. Jones had strong objections, feeling that the members with experience of the project should provide continuity on the working group, that chairmen should not have all the responsibility and that he had emailed to the Town Clerk a number of concerns regarding financial control of the project which he sought to pursue.

He proposed an amendment that the composition of the group be retained and was seconded by Cllr. Mason. A named vote was called by Cllr. Jones and Cllr. Richardson then supported the amendment (3 total). Cllrs. Battle, Breeze, Farrell, Farrow and Taylor (5) voted against, with 2 not voting /abstaining and the amendment was **LOST**. The vote on the original proposal was taken with the same 5 named councillors in favour such that it was **CARRIED** by majority.

#### 16/33 **MANAGEMENT OF THE COLESHILL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP HUB**

The background to the report was given by the Mayor who referred to a joint meeting of Council representatives with trustees of the CCP followed a Community and Environment Committee discussion. Both had been in favour of the Town Council taking over the management of the Hub. Cllr. Farrell continued the proposal, discussing arrangements of asset transfer, landlord responsibility, hub agreement, removing of duplicated facilities and revised staffing matters.

On the latter, he was proposing a 16-hour per week contract to Ms. Megan Davies and an additional 6 hours per week for Ms. Helen Whittaker. Cllr. Jones, Wootton and the Mayor all expressed support for the workings of the Hub but had reservations about the additional staff responsibility to which the Town Council would be committed. In addition, Cllrs. Battle, Breeze and Farrow had questions on the theme of whether there were more hours being contracted than the Council was able to fully or efficiently utilise.

Cllr. Farrell responded on the legal employment matters: both employees had been technically offered separate 16 hour contracts (i.e. 32 in total) and he had negotiated an agreed arrangement totalling 22 hours with them. Redundancy payments were not mandatory for employees with less than 2 years service and TUPE legislation required a 12-month retention of transferred terms and conditions, only.

In relation to the comments on the use of additional hours, Cllr. Taylor reminded members that the Council had, in recent years, increased its ranges of services offered and generated higher revenues. These service and revenue benefits came as a result of additional staffing resourcing. Staff members were often to be seen at the Town Hall at times not scheduled, in his experience. Cllr. Farrell agreed and stressed his view and observations to members that staff members were working many unpaid hours in achieving the high level of service and that 6 additional hours were easily to be put to good use.

The report recommendations were formally seconded by Cllr. Battle and the vote was taken. A named vote was called by Cllr. Farrell and Cllrs. Battle, Breeze, Farrell, Farrow,

Richardson and Taylor (6) were in favour. The proposals were duly **RESOLVED** by majority.

#### 16/34 **TOWN CLERK REPORTS**

The Youth Council had wanted it recorded in the minutes that their recent fund raising disco had raised around £100, largely due to the efforts of Cllr. Peter Fowler as DJ, who had offered his services free of charge.

The Town Clerk advised that there was to be a daytime ICCM course on Exclusive Rights of Burial (EROB) legislation and procedures. Two free places were available to the Town Council as venue provider but all members were urged to book the time to be available on Monday, 26 September. It was important that all members had a basic knowledge of the complexity of cemetery regulation.

Moore Environment had referred instances of Councillors making requests of contractors on site at the Memorial Park. Members were reminded that all requirements were to be arranged through the Town Clerk.

The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) provided training, development, certification, networking and interim cover services to clerks and councils. It had, in the past, also advised clerks in relation to employment disputes. As a result of this, some councils had refused to pay membership subscriptions as they might thereby potentially fund advice against the employer. A solution has been agreed by SLCC members to form an Association of Local Council Clerks (ALCC) which would be a separate, recognised union body. It was the intention that the SLCC fee would be reduced to the council and that ALCC membership would be a flat £10 fee to the clerk (after being free in the first year).

#### 16/35 **CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS**

The confidential minutes of the 18 May Town Council meeting were proposed to be adopted by Cllr. Taylor, seconded by Cllr. Richardson and **ACCEPTED** without amendment.

The meeting closed at 9:10 p.m.



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Town Mayor