

Approved minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 28th September 2021 in the Unionist Hall.

Present: Councillors Anderton, A. Baker, K. Baker, Brownlow, Buckland, Crawford, Day, Fradley, Jones (Chair), Pickering and Robinson.

Also present: Community Development Officer, County Councillor Groskop and the Town Clerk

There were two members of the public present at the start of the meeting.

The meeting started at 19:30.

21/103 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillor Hood and District Councillor Trimnell.

21/104 Declarations of Interests

- Councillor Anderton declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 21/124 because the matter related to his spouse's contract of employment.
- Councillor Brownlow declared a personal interest in item 21/108 a) because of his friendship with the applicant of the planning application.
- Councillor Buckland declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 21/117 as it related to a payment to his employer.

21/105 Minutes of previous meetings

To approve the notes of the informal meeting held on 10th and the minutes of the meeting held on 31st August 2021.

Councillor Crawford reported that, at item 21/100 b) in the minutes, she had said that a pavement should be installed between Station Road and the railway bridge and not along Dropping Lane. Councillor Crawford also noted that the word "from" should be removed from agenda item 21/102.

RESOLVED: It was proposed and unanimously agreed to approve the minutes once the above two corrections had been made.

21/106 Public Question Time

Members of the public did not wish to speak at this time.

21/107 To review the action points from previous meetings

The Clerk summarised progress on recent action points, all of which were either complete or in-hand

21/108 Minutes and Recommendations from Committees and Working Groups:

- a) Planning Committee** – to note the minutes of the meetings held on 24th August and 14th September and to consider the following planning application, which the Committee resolved to refer to Full Council: **20/03493/FUL** Land Adjoining Coombe Hill Farm, Combe Hill, Bruton, Somerset TA10 0QA. The erection of two single storey dwellings with associated access and landscaping.

Councillor Fradley, Chair of the Planning Committee, noted that the Committee felt that the application was of enough importance that the Full Council should be given the opportunity to comment, hence the referral to this meeting.

The Chair of the Council reported that a virtual meeting had been held with Somerset County Council (SCC) that day. It had been ascertained that phosphate mitigation on the site would be dealt with by the planting of trees to cover 20% of the site.

19:41 – The Chair allowed a public open session to allow the applicant and architect to speak.

The architect explained the long history of the project to develop the site, which had been ongoing for ten years.

There was some general discussion about how footpaths could be integrated into the site.

It was noted that Bruton needed smaller, more affordable houses rather than the two large dwellings proposed in this planning application.

The wooded area would not be owned by the eventual owners of the properties but a financial obligation would be tied to the dwellings so that owners contributed to the maintenance of the wooded area.

The Chair noted that it was the Town Council's understanding that, once the dwellings had been built, SCC still proposed to lease the remainder of the site to the Town Council, possibly for 50 years. Should an adequate financial contribution be made by SCC, the Town Council would possibly be interested in taking responsibility for the maintenance of the trees on the site.

The Chair asked the architect if four smaller houses could be built, rather than the two larger dwellings detailed in the plans. The architect said that it was unlikely that permission would be granted for four dwellings due to the infrastructure, heritage and landscaping requirements. Redesigning the site would also be prohibitively costly to the applicant.

19:59 – The Chair brought the public open session to a close.

Councillors considered the comments from the applicant and architect and acknowledged the length of time that the project had been ongoing. It was felt that the applicant had worked hard to adhere to the heritage and landscaping guidelines set out by SDC and SCC. While it was accepted that Bruton did need smaller, more affordable houses, it was noted that the proposed dwellings were well designed.

There was some general discussion regarding the need for affordable housing compared with the need to secure County Fields as an amenity area for the town. The Chair said that the application site would need to be developed in order for the remainder of the land to be secured by the Town Council for amenity land.

RESOLVED: It was proposed and agreed that the Town Council recommends approval of this application subject to a condition that no planting plan is agreed before a full open-ended consultation of Bruton residents. Although it is recognised that Bruton needs more smaller, affordable houses, it is also important that County Fields is secured for amenity land for the town. Seven votes in favour; One vote against; two abstentions.

20:14 – Two members of the public left the meeting.

b) CEEWG – to receive an update following the meeting held on 13th September.
Noted.

- c) **Retrofit Working Group** – to receive an update following the meetings held on 3rd and 17th September and to consider the following recommendations:
- That the Town Clerk is given delegated authority to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with CSE, in consultation with the Chair and Chair of the Working Group.

RESOLVED: It was proposed and unanimously agreed to delegate responsibility for signing the Memorandum of Understanding with the Centre of Sustainable Energy to the Town Clerk.

- To agree the project name, “Retrofit Bruton and Cary” and approve the logo.

RESOLVED: It was proposed and agreed that the project should be named “Retrofit Bruton and Cary”. Eight votes in favour, One vote against; Two abstentions.

- To review the Town Council’s policy, “How we use and store your information”.

It was **agreed** to defer this matter to the next meeting.

- d) **Transport Committee** – To receive a verbal update from the Chair including feedback from the Library Junction discussion.

The Chair reported that the Transport Committee had agreed at its meeting on 14th September to arrange a meeting with SCC to understand better their proposal for Library Junction. Councillor Hood, the Chair of the Transport Committee, was in the process of arranging this meeting.

21/109 Reports from District Councillor Lucy Trimnell and County Councillor Anna Groskop.

District Councillor Trimnell had sent her apologies.

County Councillor Groskop asked the Town Council to keep her informed of their wishes for the proposed changes to Library Junction.

Councillor Groskop reported that waste collections, including garden waste, should be back to normal. All drivers were in place but some were covering areas that they were not familiar with, which may have led to some few collections not taking place. Any missed collections should be reported to Somerset Waste Partnership.

Councillor Groskop went on to say that there were still some people in Bruton who had not been able to leave their homes due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation. The Community Development Officer had met with Bruton Befrienders about their plans to help people re-join the community. Councillor A. Baker suggested that Bruton Buddies could be resurrected to help with this. The Community Development Officer and Town Clerk were asked to look into this.

Action 210928/1: CDO & Town Clerk

21/110 Neighbourhood Plan – To receive a report from the Assistant Clerk and agree Councillors to form an initial working group to plan the project.

It was **agreed** to defer this matter to the next meeting.

21/111 Station Road Car Park - To receive an update on electric vehicle charging options. The Clerk reported that she had spoken with two electric vehicle (EV) charging point providers, as instructed at the previous meeting. One required the Town Council to enter into a six-month exclusivity agreement while a survey was completed to ascertain the suitability of the site and did not yet have any EV charging points in England.

The second provider was able to carry out a suitability survey without the requirement of any exclusivity agreement and was the second most popular EV charging point provider in the country. As such, the Clerk was moving forward with the second company and would report back with any progress.

Arrangements would need to be made with the landowner to enable the required parking spaces to be leased to the EV charging point provider and this would be dealt with in due course.

21/112 Somerset Unitary Authority – To receive an update from an initial meeting with Castle Cary and Wincanton Town Councils regarding a pilot Local Community Network. The Chair reported that he and the Clerk had attended a virtual meeting with the Chairs and Clerks of Castle Cary and Wincanton Town Councils. The notes from the meeting were not yet available but the proposal was for the three Town Councils to work together with other smaller parishes to become one of the four pilot Local Community Networks. The focus of the pilot would be health and wellbeing, including the inclusion of young people and active, low carbon travel.

21/113 Christmas Event 2021 – to review arrangements for the event, agree the date and that the road closure can be applied for and to confirm that the event will be covered by the Town Council's insurance.

Councillor Pickering reported that there had been a meeting of shopkeepers in Bruton to talk about plans for the Christmas Event and late-night shopping days. It had been agreed that the Christmas Event should take place on Thursday 2nd December, so as not to clash with similar events in other towns, and that it would be a local-focussed event.

The Community Development Officer reported that a grant had been secured for the provision of a Christmas tree opposite the Post Office. The small trees that were located on shop fronts would have battery-powered lights and would be on timers.

Stalls would be organised by Councillors A. Baker and Pickering plus another member of the shopkeepers group.

20:51 – Councillor Brownlow left the meeting.

There was a general discussion about insurance for the event.

20:53 – Councillor Brownlow returned to the meeting.

RESOLVED: It was proposed and unanimously agreed that the Town Council would apply for the road closure for 2nd December and that the event would be covered by the Town Council's insurance. The Community Development Officer and the Clerk would work with the shopkeepers' group to assist with the event planning.

Action 210928/2: CDO & Town Clerk

21/114 Casual Vacancy – To hear an update on the process.

The Clerk reported that no residents had requested that the vacancy should be filled by election, so the relevant co-option vacancy notices had been posted. Candidate names would be presented at the October Full Council meeting.

21/115 Bank Reconciliations

To approve the bank reconciliations for the HSBC current and deposit accounts and the Unity Trust current account to 31st July and 31st August 2021.

RESOLVED: It was proposed and unanimously agreed to approve the bank reconciliations for the HSBC current and deposit accounts and the Unity Trust current account to 31st July and 31st August 2021.

21/116 Budget Position

To note the budget report to 31st August 2021.

Noted.

21/117 Accounts for Payment - Members to consider the schedule of payments (September 2021)

20:59 - Councillor Buckland left the meeting due to the disclosable pecuniary interest declared at item 21/104.

RESOLVED: It was proposed and unanimously agreed to approve the payments as presented.

21:00 – Councillor Buckland returned to the meeting.

21/118 To note receipt of the second half of the 2021-22 precept at £69,205.50. Noted.

21/119 Reports Council to receive reports from:

a) Members representing the Council on outside/other bodies

Abbey Ponds Working Group - Councillor Brownlow reported that, when the new path was constructed, the spoil was used to create a second bund. Some additional soil was needed to enable planting of butterfly-friendly plants. Aggregate soil had been sourced and could be obtained free-of-charge. It would be delivered by a local farmer and the Town Council's contractor would distribute it evenly onto the bund before wet weather set in. Members of the working group would supervise the delivery of the soil to ensure no damage was caused to the new path. The Chair said that the Community Development Officer should ensure that the aggregate soil was suitable for the site.

Action 210928/3: CDO

BruBowl Working Group – Councillor Pickering reported that there had been a recent meeting of the working group to discuss fundraising and project progress. Shops and businesses in Bruton had agreed that monies raised from their events would be donated to the BruBowl project.

b) Town Councillors

Nothing to report.

c) Chairman

The Chair reported that he had taken part in the shooting of a video to promote the BruBowl project.

The Chair had attended a virtual meeting of the Clinical Commissioning Group and had shared the slides with Councillors.

21/120 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC - To consider exclusion of press and public for remainder of meeting under Public Bodies Admissions To Meetings Act 1960, Section 1 (2) on the grounds that discussion of the following business relates to confidential information regarding staffing.

RESOLVED: It was proposed and unanimously agreed to exclude the press and public for the remainder of the meeting.

21/121 To consider paying the Town Clerk for additional hours worked.

RESOLVED: It was proposed and unanimously agreed to pay the Clerk for the additional hours worked.

21/122 To review the number of hours worked by the Town Clerk and consider any changes to the contracted hours.

Councillor Robinson explained that the previous Clerk had been contracted to work 28 hours per week, whereas the current Clerk was contracted to work 15 hours per week. The new Assistant Clerk post had been filled in August, meaning that the Clerk had not had the additional support needed from April o August.

RESOLVED: It was proposed and unanimously agreed to increase the Town Clerk's contracted hours from 15 to 20 per week.

21/123 To note that the Town Clerk's probationary period has ended and to consider making her contract of employment permanent.

RESOLVED: It was proposed and unanimously agreed to make the Town Clerk's contract of employment permanent.

21:14 – Councillor Anderton left the meeting due to the disclosable pecuniary interest declared at item 21/104. The Community Development Officer left the meeting.

21/124 To note that the Community Development Officer's contract is due to end and to agree to extend the contract for a further 12 months at 15 hours per week.

The Council unanimously agreed to express thanks to the Community Development Officer for her hard work, especially in signposting other organisations to available grants.

RESOLVED: It was proposed and unanimously agreed to extend the Community Development Officers contract of employment for a further 12 months and that the contracted hours should be reduced from 20 to 15 per week.

The meeting ended at 21:15.

Signed: _____ Date: _____