

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL,  
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD, ON  
WEDNESDAY, 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2011,  
STARTING AT 7 P.M. WITH THE OPEN FORUM

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs P P Quadling, Chairman

Councillors:

G P Balaam  
R F W Brame  
M P Brindle  
Mrs M P Chapman-Allen  
S H Chapman-Allen  
J A Harding  
T J Jermy  
R G Kybird

T J Lamb  
D G Mortimer  
A Paines  
B J Skull  
M G Spencer  
Mrs P A Spencer  
S N H Wright

Open Forum

There were no matters raised.

\* \* \* \*

602/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made.

603/10 MINUTES

(a) Council Meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2011

The unconfirmed minutes had been included in the agenda papers.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2011, excepting those items dealt with following the exclusion of press and public [addressed under item 615/10 below], be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Mayor as Chairman. Minutes 545/10 to 558/10 inclusive referred.

(b) Correction to Minute 425/10  
(from Council Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2011: Item heading "The Future of the Carnegie Room")

The Town Clerk's attention had been drawn to some garbled wording in the text approved at the February 2011 meeting under minute 485/10(a), as indicated on the attached annex paper. It was agreed to correct this.

RESOLVED that the wording of the first sentence of the Resolution under this item be changed in the minute book version to read as follows:

*“RESOLVED that the Town Council commit itself unequivocally to a refurbishment of the existing premises – on its own terms – as part of a planned, overall refurbishment of the entire Guildhall Complex, with structural modifications not to be ruled out.”*

#### 604/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received, as all Councillors present.

#### 605/10 COMMITTEE REPORTS

RESOLVED that the reports of the following meetings be received and adopted:

- (a) Allotments Committee: 12th April 2011  
Minutes 579/10 to 583/10 inclusive referred, including the four Recommendations under minute 583/10.
- (b) Planning Committee: 13<sup>th</sup> April 2011  
Minutes 584/10 to 595/10 inclusive referred, as did five 'off agenda' matters raised and covered in the concluding section of the report.

It was agreed to cover under this item 605/10(b) an issue, which could not await the next meeting of the Planning Committee owing to a comment deadline set by Breckland Council:

#### Proposed removal of tree in front of King Street Baptist Church

This was the subject of a letter, sent on behalf of the Church leadership and dated 9<sup>th</sup> April 2011, which the Council had received.

Members were by no means persuaded that removal was the sole option and, after brief deliberation, the following proposal from Councillor B J Skull was supported:

RESOLVED that the Town Clerk propose to Breckland Council pollarding and not removal of the tree. The letter referred to above had made no reference to what the Church apparently had in mind for the space adjacent to the tree, namely, a garden area designed with the particular needs of those with certain disabilities in mind. The Town Clerk was asked to make the further point that the Town Council could envisage a pollarded tree co-existing with such a garden area. Retention of the tree should not be looked upon as ruling this out.

#### Need for Planning Committee Meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2011?

Finally under this agenda item 605/10(b), it was agreed to consider the need to convene the meeting of the Planning Committee that had been scheduled for 4<sup>th</sup> May 2011, given that voting in the local elections was taking place the following day.

RESOLVED that the current Planning Committee Chairman and the Town Clerk be authorised to comment on any urgent planning matters in the pre-election and immediate post-election period.

606/10 MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor referred members to the lists of Events Attended and Forthcoming Events, included in the agenda papers.

Events attended since the last meeting

March

31 Talk on regalia for German exchange students from Thetford Grammar School

April

1 Mayor's Ball

6 The Mayor of St Edmundsbury Cllr Ian Houlder "Celebration of Spring" Charity Fundraising Event

7 Inner Wheel Club of Thetford Birthday Tea

The Mayor of Stowmarket Cllr Mrs Poppy Robinson Charity Quiz Night

8 The Chairman of Forest Heath District Council Cllr John McGhee Civic Reception

9 Thetford Garden & Allotment Club Spring Show

Thetford Singers Easter Concert

10 The Chairman of Norfolk County Council Cllr Tony Tomkinson Service of Thanksgiving

13 Mayoral talk at Riversdale

14 Thetford Players "Tavern Time"

15 The Chairman of Suffolk County Council Cllr Eddy Alcock Chairman's Reception

17 Mildenhall Fen Tigers

23 Thetford Festival & Concert Committee St George's Day Concert

24 Laburnum Grove Thetford Bikers Club

She went on to express, on behalf of the townspeople and especially her fellow councillors, her great appreciation of the years of service given by the three councillors not seeking re-election on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2011, these being Cllrs G P Balaam, Mrs M P Chapman-Allen and S H Chapman-Allen.

The Mayor had been approached by Cllr Balaam, who was asking whether the Council would agree to his remaining a member of the Band Concert Group, albeit as a non-councillor. Those present had no objection to this.

Councillor Mrs Chapman-Allen took the opportunity to put on record her pride in having had, over the course of the current electoral term, both her sons serve alongside her.

RESOLVED that Councillor G P Balaam become a 'non-councillor' member of the Band Concert Group following the imminent elections

#### 607/10 TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

##### Municipal and United Charities

Councillor Mrs P A Spencer, in her role as Vice-Chairman of the Charity Trustees, presented a proposal that the annual Christmas Party arranged for Almshouse Residents be discontinued by virtue of falling attendances over recent years, with trustees now outnumbering residents. She was proposing instead adoption of a revised practice, whereby each resident would be given a small gift, which could be delivered by Town Council staff. Councillor Mrs Spencer was aware that the Party was "in the Mayor's gift", but wondered whether this idea would find favour with the Council.

Councillor T J Lamb was particularly opposed to anyone but the next Mayor being asked to consider any change to current practice, the assumption being that party costs had always been charged direct to the Mayor's Allowance.

##### [Afternote from Town Clerk:

*Costs are indeed so charged, the cost of the 2010 party being £256.46.]*

RESOLVED that the holding of an Almshouse Party in 2011 be at the discretion of the Mayor elected on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2011. The Town Clerk was asked to relay this decision to the Chairman of the Municipal and United Charities Trustees.

#### 608/10 COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Both County Councillors M P Brindle and Mrs M P Chapman-Allen referred to the increased local focus of the Area Highways Office, notwithstanding the series of actual and/or imminent cuts in its funding.

That said, it was noted that recent work on Norwich Road – carried out in rapid succession under two separate contracts – suggested an, at times disjointed approach, from which it was hoped those involved in commissioning the work had learned.

609/10 RECENT EVENTS AND MEETINGS OF OTHER BODIES ATTENDED BY THE TOWN CLERK AND/OR TOWN MANAGER

The Town Clerk had nothing of significance to report under this item.

Town Manager's Report

Her report had been included in the agenda papers and made reference to the following meetings on various dates:

- with Barclays Bank Manager to arrange dates for bank staff volunteers to start stripping St Peter's Church floor;
- at Thetford Business Forum to give presentation on projects;
- viewing of King's House and the Guildhall with documentary film-makers planning a film on Maharajah Duleep Singh (with particular emphasis on the Duleep Singh Collection);
- MTF Heritage Stage 2 project funding update with HEART and Breckland Council representatives;
- MTF Programme Delivery Group Meeting in Dereham;
- with the Council's solicitor on various property-related matters;
- with the Historic Buildings Officer in St Peter's Church to discuss future plans.

She went on to confirm that £40k of allotment monies – as referred to at previous meetings had now been received and banked by the Town Council. She also reported on the 'virtual shop-front' scheme, which would 'enhance' various Riverside Walk premises for as long as these remained unoccupied.

RESOLVED that the Town Manager's report be noted.

610/10 TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL FORUM AND NEWSLETTER

Copies of the latest documents received from Breckland Council had been included in the agenda papers.

RESOLVED that the summary of issues discussed at the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2011 Forum be noted.

611/10 PREPARATIONS FOR MAYOR-MAKING AND THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Town Clerk announced that, as it was election year, he was not intending to ask the present Council to express a view at this meeting on detailed matters that would be decided formally at Mayor-Making 2011 (now scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> May 2011). He was proposing a Briefing Session for the new Council on Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2011, at which thought would be given to nominating a Mayor-Elect and any other priority matters relating to Mayor-Making and the Annual Town Meeting.

That said, he had already drafted a Meetings Calendar for 2011/12 and wanted those present to comment on the acceptability of having the first

'regular' meeting of the new Council on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2011, a mere one week after Mayor-Making. There was no objection to this expressed by those present.

As far as the Annual Town Meeting was concerned, he would be asking the present Mayor to sign the requisite public notice

RESOLVED that:

- (a) a Briefing Session for the post-election Council be held in the King's House Council Chamber on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2011, starting at 6 pm;
- (b) the first Council Meeting after Mayor-Making be scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> May 2011, starting at 7 pm;
- (c) the Mayor as Chairman of the Council convene the Annual Town Meeting now scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> May 2011 (following on from Mayor-Making earlier that evening) by signing the requisite Public Notice.

#### 612/10 SKAWINA DAYS 2011

The Town Clerk confirmed that travel arrangements were in hand for the three currently serving Councillors, who would constitute the Civic Party, irrespective of whether re-elected on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

RESOLVED that this update be noted.

#### 613/10 REQUESTS FOR CONCESSIONS AND/OR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The sole item addressed under this heading was a request by The Thetford Singers for a £100 donation to assist with covering the costs of their June 2011 event in King's House Gardens.

RESOLVED that a £100 donation be made to The Thetford Singers.

#### 614/10 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded for the remaining items of business on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

## 615/10 MINUTES

### Council Meeting: 30<sup>th</sup> March 2011 – items addressed following the exclusion of press and public

RESOLVED that minutes 559/10 to 563/10 inclusive be confirmed as true records and signed by the Mayor as Chairman.

## 616/10 COMMITTEE REPORTS

### (a) Personnel Committee: 4<sup>th</sup> April 2011

The Committee Chairman, Councillor M P Brindle, tabled his draft minutes.

RESOLVED that minutes 564/10 to 571/10 inclusive be received as the report of the meeting of the Personnel Committee, held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

### (b) General Purposes Committee: 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011

The Committee Chairman, Councillor D G Mortimer, presented the unconfirmed minutes of this meeting; these had been included in the agenda papers.

RESOLVED that minutes 572/10 to 578/10 inclusive be received as the report of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee, held on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

## 617/10 STATUS OF MINUTES AGREED UNDER PREVIOUS AGENDA ITEMS

RESOLVED that the minutes covered by preceding agenda items 615/10 and 616/10 be released into the public domain in their entirety, save in the case of minute 568/10, which would appear in edited form owing to its sensitive content.

## 618/10 ST PETER'S CHURCH UPDATE

The Town Manager updated members on the recent meeting in the Church with the Historic Buildings Officer (referred to in the report covered under item 609/10 above), a meeting also attended by the Town Clerk.

In one sense, this had been a timely discussion, as it had brought home to both the Town Clerk and Town Manager the need to be extremely cautious about making any changes to the fabric of the building without prior consent. Various seemingly inconsequential alterations proposed by the now seemingly defunct Thetford Arts Centre would not necessarily have been approved as a matter of course.

This prompted a range of comment from members about the degree to which the Historic Buildings Officer could effectively impede plans for the immediate

term, which the St Peter's Church Group had previously given its blessing to and which the Town Council had itself endorsed.

Now that the well-intentioned efforts of local enthusiasts appeared to be going nowhere - at least, in the immediate term - the Town Manager was urging the Council to consider commissioning a proper scoping document from a conservation architect, who could present in a credible and potentially persuasive way (with the wish to secure Heritage Lottery Funding a key factor) the community's longer-term aspirations for the building, with any potential impact on the fabric of the building clearly indicated and assessed.

There was majority support for the Town Manager obtaining quotations for such a document.

RESOLVED that the Town Manager be authorised to so act.

Afternote from Town Clerk

*Capital Reserve monies, recently re-designated 'St Peter's Church', cannot at the moment be used to cover the cost of documents such as the one referred to above, the reason being that a binding commitment to actual capital works has yet to be made. That said, a sum of £3k has been included in the provisional 2011/12 operating budget – in the Properties Cost Centre – for St Peter's Church, although this sum has, to date, been looked upon as a means of meeting ongoing overhead costs that will arise in the course of that year.*

Chairman