Town Development committee minutes

Minutes

From the committee meeting at 7pm on Tuesday 14 May 2024

At St. Margaret's Hall, Bradford on Avon

Decision making

The **decisions** made by the committee at this meeting are at minutes 1, 2, 4 & 9.

Present

Councillors:

- Kate Bessant
- Sarah Gibson
- Alex Kay
- Simon McNeil-Ritchie (Vice-Chair)
- Jennie Parker
- Alison Potter (Chairman)
- Tim Trimble
- Katie Vigar

Town Council Officers:

- Ian Brown - Chief Executive & Town Clerk

Meeting clerk:

- Sarah Howe – Committee Clerk

Apologies

From Councillors unable to attend the meeting:

- Dave Garwood
- Jack Vittles

1. Agenda item 1 - Election of Chair of the Committee

   Councillor Potter as previous Chair took nominations for Chair of the committee for the current financial year. Councillor Potter was nominated by Councillor Vigar and seconded by Councillor Gibson and with no further nominations and all in favour **resolved**: Councillor Potter was elected as Chair of the Town Development committee.

2. Agenda item 2 - Election of Vice Chair of the Committee

   Councillor Potter asked for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair. Councillor McNeil-Ritchie was nominated by Councillor Kay and seconded by Councillor Bessant and with all in favour **resolved:** Councillor McNeil-Ritchie was elected as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

3. Agenda item 5 - Declarations of interest

   No declarations of interest were made.

4. Agenda item 6 - Minutes from the previous meeting of the committee

   Proposed by Councillor Katie Vigar.
   Seconded by Councillor Tim Trimble.

   And with 6 in favour and 2 abstentions it was **resolved**: that the Minutes of the last committee meeting held on Tuesday 26 March 2024 be accepted as a true record of the meeting.

5. Agenda item 7 - Matters arising - None

6. Agenda item 8 – Chair's Update

   The Chair read out a statement by a resident in support of the Council's position regarding Becky Addy Wood following the court case which had concluded on 26th April 2024. The full statement is at Appendix B.

   The Chair also updated members on the Call for Sites made in Autumn 2023 because of the Wiltshire Council decision to reduce the old Golf Course site to a reserve site for development. Currently 2 small sites have been put forward which would only be large enough for a few houses, however, 7 larger sites have also been suggested which the town council are looking into and proposing further discussions.

7. Agenda item 9 - Comments on planning applications from the town council's delegated planning meetings

   The minutes and decisions were noted from meetings held on 20 March and 3 and 17 April 2024.

   It was agreed to send the planning applications sent through by Wiltshire Council for town council comment to **all councillors.** Councillor Potter can then collate any comments and organise any site visits for those who wish to attend before the Town Council response is sent through to the planning officers.

8. Agenda item 10 – Poulton Park Play Area

   The Chair read an update from the Deputy Town Clerk and Community and Engagement Officer who are meeting the play contractors commissioned to replace and extend the play area at Poulton Park. It is hoped that installation work on phase 1 will begin by end of May/ beginning of June. News and updates will appear on the website and via social media.

   Fundraising is underway for phase 2 and the Chair appealed to councillors to come up with fundraising ideas. Councillor Potter would like to organise a dog show to take place in Poulton Park at some point over the summer.

9. Agenda item 11 – Visit Wiltshire and the Local Visitors Enterprise Partnership (LVEP).

   The Town Clerk introduced the item, referred to his report and stated that the government directive to introduce new LVEPs across the country (to the grow the visitor economy of a county or region) has led to Wiltshire Council choosing to cut their funding to Visit Wiltshire which saves the council the £150,000 annual grant. This decision now excludes Visit Wiltshire from applying to convert itself into a LVEP as it must be a private/public partnership. Wiltshire will be the only county in the country without this partnership in place to support local tourism. It seems the leader of Wiltshire Council has developed an App and thinks this will be sufficient to entice tourists into the area.
   Consequently 10 local towns across Wiltshire have come together to try and form the public side of the partnership on behalf of Visit Wiltshire and once the LVEP is in place the partnership can then access support from Visit England.

The recommendations are therefore as follows:

- A letter of support from the town council to Visit England in favour of a Wiltshire Tourism Partnership and the application for a LVEP for Wiltshire
- Agree a budget of £5000 for the for funding for the LVEP from 2024/25 budget
- Agree a grant of £1000 from 2024/25 to prime the LVEP application by Visit Wiltshire.

Councillors generally expressed their support for the proposal and Councillor Vigar added that the leader of Wiltshire Council had a poor track record of responding to letters written by the local towns expressing concern over this decision.

Proposed by Councillor Gibson

Seconded by Councillor Kay

and with all in favour **resolved:** to agree to the three recommendations stated in the town clerks report and as set out above.

10. Next meeting

The next committee meeting is arranged for Tuesday 23 July 2024.

End of the meeting

The meeting finished at 7.45pm

Appendix A: There was 1 member of the public present who asked 1 question.

(Q1) A local resident who runs an organic, community farm is very disappointed that Wiltshire Council did not contact him for comment regarding a planning application on neighbouring land. Planning has since been granted for an industrial building to be erected on agricultural land and the likely activities of this neighbour may well compromise his organic status.

Councillors commiserated with the resident and agreed to write to Wiltshire Council highlighting their concerns around the granting of this planning permission.

Appendix B.

Monday 6th May 2024

Dear Bradford on Avon Town Council,

I wish to express my appreciation and admiration for the current Bradford on Avon Town Council.

I was present in court last week for the last two (of four) days in the case brought by Lisa Otter-Barry and Chris Humphries against the Town Council. I submitted a witness statement in defence of the Town Council.

The court experience was very intense, and an enormous amount of evidence was brought into the process. The procedure revealed to me the outstanding diligence and conscientiousness of the Town Council officers and Councillors in their work on our behalf over the last few years.

I particularly wish to thank Chris Hogg, whose professionalism and diligence as the Green Spaces Officer were revealed to be exemplary. Also thanks to Councillor Alex Kay, who was put under considerable pressure during her interrogation and who answered every question with steady accuracy and dignity. Both Alex Kay and Chris Hogg have worked relentlessly hard to restore and protect Nature in the Bradford on Avon area, and despite the criticism inherent in the accusations from FROBAW, their efforts continue to make Bradford on Avon and its surroundings one of the most treasured areas of England, especially for those of us who live here.

Similarly, Ian Brown showed in his evidence that the Town Council adheres to the correct processes in managing the widespread affairs of the Town Council on behalf of the taxpayer.

I also am grateful for the presence in court of Cllr Katie Vigar, Cllr Tim Trimble, Cllr Alison Potter, and Cllr Kate Besant. Their support helped to boost my morale and I'm sure did so for the other members of the Defence team.

Judgement has not yet been given, so we must all wait patiently to see whether there is a just and reasonable outcome to this unfortunate affair.

My sincere thanks to you all.