

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES
COMMITTEE
HELD IN ARDEN HALL, CASTLE
BROMWICH ON WEDNESDAY 12TH MARCH
2014
AT 19.30 HRS**

Those present:

- Chairman:** Cllr M Hayes
Councillors: Cllr Mrs. P Allen Cllr E Hicks Cllr J Riordan
 Cllr Mrs. A Haywood Cllr I Hiley
Officers: Mrs. C Tibbles, Clerk to the Council/RFO
Public: None.

1. Apologies.

The apologies received from Cllr J Horne-MacDonald, Cllr A Terry and Cllr J Whelan were noted for the reason given.

2. Declarations of pecuniary or conflict of interests.

None declared.

3. Dispensations.

None requested.

4. Minutes of the previous Meeting.

The Clerk asked that an amendment be made to page 2, Item 8.2, 5th line to read ‘mirror pond’ and not mill pond. Also, Item 6, planning application number 2014/148 did not have the recommendation of the Committee detailed. Therefore, at the suggestion of the Chairman, **IT WAS AGREED** that the acceptance of the Minutes be deferred to the next meeting.

5. Questions from the Public.

Under Standing Order 70, the Chairman prepared to adjourn the meeting to invite questions from members of the public but there were none in attendance.

6. Planning/Licensing Applications.

There were no new applications for consideration. The Clerk informed members that a resident had sought assistance with objecting to minor full application number 2013/1992 which had already been considered by the parish council on 26th February and recommended for the Borough Council to approve it, subject to any neighbours comments. She had therefore suggested the resident could approach the Borough Councillors for their assistance, giving the relevant contact details, and this had been done.

The recent objections of the council to Premise Licence Application PREM756/14 by Timberley Service Station, 296 Chester Road, had been submitted and the Solihull Licensing department had requested additional evidence. Following discussion, **IT WAS AGREED** to respond as follows: An increase in noise and nuisance causing disturbance to neighbouring residents had been publicly reported by occupiers of the neighbouring Chestnut Court residence. Parish Councillors had personally witnessed that when pubs closed there were congregating groups of people moving to the location of the garage. Recent displacement of groups who previously congregated at the Chester Arms site (now redeveloped) were now regularly seen at or near this garage and when the recently vacated Redcroft Supplies site would be redeveloped this was felt likely to increase again as groups worked their way down the Chester Road. A parish councillor had lived directly opposite the garage for several years and personally witnessed noise problems, lewd behaviour and

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Admin Asst
asap

Clerk
18/3

empty beer cans being discarded by customers. This had noticeably increased, as previously anticipated by the parish council, and was a significant reason for the member to leave Castle Bromwich and live elsewhere.

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7. World War 1 Commemoration in Castle Bromwich.

Members noted that the annual Civic Service on 8th June would have the additional theme of the 100th Anniversary of the First World War; a special service would be held on the evening of Sunday 3rd August at St. Mary and St. Margaret Church and the annual Remembrance Day Parade would also give an opportunity for reflection on the 100th Anniversary. The Clerk had a supply of wooden crosses for a minimum donation of £1 and these would be available during council office hours for the whole year.

8. Carol Concert and Christmas Tree.

Cllr Mrs. Haywood reported that final review of arrangements had taken place with some interesting new ideas to increase the involvement of schools and children. Following consideration, **ON THE PROPOSITION** of Cllr Hiley, **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs. Haywood, **IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that investigations be made to purchase a green or red LED Christmas Tree for Arden Hall frontage, being funded initially from Council Office earmarked reserves, with two extra fundraising quizzes being arranged by members to help fund the purchase. The Clerk would arrange measurement and a site meeting, which members would be invited to attend.

Clerk
04/14

9. Delegated Powers to Discharge Functions.

The WALC information on the above topic was duly noted with interest.

10. Speedwatch Scheme.

Members noted that the guest speaker from the police had been arranged to attend the council meeting on Wednesday 24th September. Following consideration, members asked that in addition to inviting the already agreed parties, that the Police Commissioners for West Midlands and Warwickshire also be invited.

Asst. Clerk
04/14

11. West Midlands Pension Fund – Discretion Policy.

Members noted the existing Discretion Policy may need to be reviewed and the Clerk would endeavour to find information for the Council to consider, although timing was somewhat difficult with very late changes to legislation.

Council
26/3

12. VAT Partial Exemption Calculation 2012-2013.

Further to the information previously circulated, the Clerk apologised that the review of the above document was still being completed due to other unexpected issues. It would be circulated to members upon completion.

Clerk
18/3

13. Financial Scrutiny.

Members each studied the folders and then scrutinized/countersigned the different financial documents available. Following a study of income receipts and subsequent discussion, **IT WAS AGREED** that the Leisure Services Committee should compare the published A rate hire charges with those paid by A rate business customers and scrutinize special rates given by discounts/deals in an endeavour to assess consistency.

LSC
04/15

14. Risk Schedule.

Following preview by members, the Clerk undertook to update one item and seek information on two Hall inspection matters prior to submission to council.

Clerk
14/3

15. Working Parties and Steering Group

Due to difficulties of members attending, the Buildings working party planned for 19th March was cancelled and re-scheduled for 6.30 pm prior to Leisure Services Committee meeting on 7th May. Members would review the previous list of priorities.

Members
19/2

16. Residents' Concerns.

Members noted the list of concerns.

17. Training.

Following consideration, **ON THE PROPOSITION** of the Chairman, **SECONDED** by

Asst Clerk

Mrs. Haywood, **IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the Clerk be authorised to attend a VAT course in Newark in September. Members noted that the Hall Manager and the Clerk were booked to attend an ACAS course on employment legislation changes. Members noted the reports from the Clerk and Cllr Knibb who had attended training events as follows:

The Clerk had attended the 8th Practitioners' Conference held by the Society of Local Council Clerks on 28th February/1st March. Although in the past the Clerk had assisted with some of the arrangements and hosted or introduced speakers, this conference was slightly different. She had been extremely proud and privileged to chair two workshop sessions, introducing Youth Councillor Jessica Browne who gave a confident delivery of an inspiring and informative presentation which was amazing. Her ambassadorial role in promoting the Youth Parish Council, her fellow Youth Councillors and Castle Bromwich had to be seen to be believed. Whilst the Chairman had been grateful to the Clerk for the chance to make a presentation (with permission being given from her school and parents to attend the conference), the Clerk believed that this council should in fact be indebted to her for an incredible performance to over 70 clerks. The new DVD on How to Set Up a Youth Council was played and 26 councils had requested copies and additional information. The Clerk had also attended sessions and presentations on How to Win Friends and Influence People; Coats of Arms – acquiring it, using it and protecting it; Dealing with People; Year End Finance; Quotes, Contracts and Tendering. The final session was listening to Alastair Humphreys, a motivational speaker who shared parallels with the Clerk's role with his adventures cycling around the world. It was a busy conference but packed with highlights and inspiration from both speakers and fellow clerks – but this time topped by an incredible pride in the achievements of this Youth Council and its enthusiastic and capable Chairman. Cllr Knibb had attended the WALC Briefing Day on Saturday 1st March which, as usual had been very well attended and filled with essential information that all councillors needed to know and understand if they wished to become effective councillors within their council and for their community. The first guest speaker was William Roden from the Department of Communities and Local Government National Development Planning Team who had given an update on the National picture for Neighbourhood Planning with examples of the way different communities had managed to fund and create their own plans and in several cases gained substantial sums of monies to be spent on their community infrastructure. The second speaker was Stephen Shaw who had been instrumental in a successful 5 year campaign that resulted in the Sustainable Communities Act 2007. He was currently the National Co-ordinator of Local Works and was the first point of call if a council wished to use this Act as the key tool to trigger needed action from the government to help create sustainable communities within a sustainable society. Even more valuable to councils was that they now had a right of appeal to an independent panel that was operated by NALC and had NALC representation on it. After lunch came the workshops and he had attended the "Skills to assist Councillors in their role" presented by Julia Wright, a training consultant who had worked with NALC to create the core skills training pack and the advanced skills training pack. She had also written the training package designed for chairman of local councils. Julia had been a parish councillor since May 2007. The session was totally interactive and very well delivered, being recommended by Cllr Knibb that all councillors would benefit greatly from such a workshop if it was ever presented again. An Open Forum was then held with all guest speakers and leaders available to answer any questions before the Seminar was closed by the chairman delivering a positive speech encouraging all councillors and councils to become pro-active and to use the Sustainable Communities Act as the tool and mechanism to stimulate government into delivering what they had offered to us via the Local Communities Act. Handouts were available for viewing on the WALC web site and of course he was always available to assist members if they asked.

18. Clerk's Report.

Members were informed of the unexpected resignation of a keyholder which was temporarily affecting the opening hours of Hob Farm recreation ground until new arrangements were put in place. A Solihull Area Committee questionnaire had been tabled for members and notification given of two payment adjustments needed after the software ledgers had been posted after the last meeting. In response to parish council suggestions, Solihull MBC had confirmed the Scrutiny Panel would consider the effect on use of land but not the lack of a pedestrian crossing outside Arden Hall. An invoice had been received from the council's solicitor for legal fees, in line with anticipated charges. Solihull MBC had confirmed they would consider the parish council offer to contribute a bench or plaque for the Hurst Lane Place project. The Youth Council would be making a visit to Parliament on Monday 7th July and as with the previous trip, it was planned for the council to cover the cost of transport. A few unused spaces would be offered to members on a first come, first served basis. The webmaster would temporarily be unavailable for a short period and an interim message would be put in relevant places as necessary.

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Clerk
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