

MINUTES OF THE **MEETING OF THE COUNCIL** HELD ON **WEDNESDAY 21st JULY 2021** AT 6.30 P.M. AT NEWTON'S PLACE, 43 WOLBOROUGH STREET, NEWTON ABBOT

Present: Councillors M Joyce (Mayor) Presiding
Mrs C Bunday (Deputy Mayor)

Councillors: P Bullivant C Jenks
D Corney-Walker R Jenks
A Hall Mrs A Jones
R Hall C Parker
R Hayes M E Ryan
M Hocking Mrs L Sheffield
D Howe

Invited Guests: Rev Gareth Regan
County and District Councillor Janet Bradford
District Councillor Liam Mullone
Michael Watts Barclays Banks

Officers in attendance: Philip Rowe Town Clerk
Samantha Scott Deputy Town Clerk & RFO
Sally Henley Town Development Manager
Nigel Canham Communications Advisor
Alexandra Robinson Principal Administrator

Also in attendance – one member of the public.

78. **WELCOME FROM THE MAYOR**

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Michael Watts, Market Director, Barclays Bank, County and District Councillors. The Mayor noted the recent Amber Warning relating to extreme heat from the Met Office and advised Members that whilst it was a formal meeting that they should make themselves as comfortable as possible within the circumstances.

The Mayor invited Rev Gareth Regan to open the meeting with prayers.

79. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Karen Crout and Mike Pilkington and District Councillors Gordon and Mrs Jackie Hook.

80. **INTERESTS**

None.

81. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 2nd June and the Special Meeting on 23rd June 2021 were received and signed as correct records.

82. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

83. **PRESENTATION – BARCLAYS BANK**

The Mayor welcomed Mr Michael Watts, Market Director for Barclays Bank and invited him to update Members on Barclays' plans for Newton Abbot post the closure of the branch scheduled for November 2021.

Mr Watts thanked the Council for its invitation to the meeting and provided a summary of the factors taken into consideration by Barclays Bank in deciding to close the branch in Queen Street Newton Abbot. Mr Watts raised the following key points:

- With over 30 years experience working for Barclays he understood market of retail banking;
- Significant reduction in footfall in last ten years amplified by the disruption caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic;
- Physical premises are costly to maintain and the Newton Abbot branch requires significant investment to bring the building up to standard;
- Branch closures are part of a phased 'transformation process' in line with customers change in banking habits;
- The move to telephone, online and mobile app methods of banking reduce the primary need for physical banking in a branch – even cheques can be deposited using a mobile app; and
- Counter transactions in Newton Abbot have reduced by 66% over the last three years and are likely to continue falling.

Members raised the following points in response to Mr Watts initial summary:

- Difficulty accessing and increased waiting times for telephone banking;
- Location and distance to next available branches;
- Elderly and vulnerable most disadvantaged from the branch closure not able to travel extended journeys to alternative branches elsewhere;
- Equally the farming community in a largely rural region rely upon counter services;
- Two branches remain in close proximity in Torbay but the closure will leave Teignbridge without a branch;
- Ignores customer loyalty to Barclays Bank and little alternative provision; and
- Explore possibility of providing services from shared accommodation.

Mr Watts explained that no single factor was responsible for the closure of the Newton Abbot branch but that the decline in footfall had significantly contributed to their decision. He added that in response to the difficulties experienced with telephone banking during the Pandemic that all call handling had returned to the UK and that banking would continue to move with the times and encompass the technology available. Mr Watts closed his presentation in offering the Council a tour of the Newton Abbot branch and invited any further questions to be directed to him and he would respond accordingly.

The Mayor thanked Mr Watts for his informative and thought provoking briefing. He noted that Members were not happy at the prospect of the branch closure and would seek further information from Mr Watts if needed. Where upon Mr Watts was invited to leave the meeting.

84. **REPORTS OF COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES**

A. County and District Councillor Janet Bradford reported on the following issues in which she had direct involvement:

- Teignbridge Licencing and Planning Committees
- Refurbishment of Decoy play park
- Wolborough Cemetery encouragement of wildflowers and wildlife in partnership with ACTion for Teignbridge
- Allotment Open Day at Decoy
- Devon County Council Childrens' Scrutiny Committee
- Public Rights of Way and Pot Holes
- 20 mph Perception Survey for Newton Abbot
- Compensation for residents in proximity to the South Devon Highway
- Visit to Buckland Community Centre

B. District Councillor Liam Mullone reported on the following issues in which he had direct involvement:

- Refurbishment of Decoy play park
- Consistent approach to management of Tree Preservation Orders
- Redevelopment of Alexandra Theatre

C. District Councillor Colin Parker reported on the following issues in which he had direct involvement:

- Turf Cutting of A382/A383 Houghton Barton and £38m Government funding for next phase
- Wildflowers
- Development of Council Houses at Drake Road and East Street
- Grass Cutting Shaldon Hill
- Speeding vehicles Shaldon Hill and Haytor Drive
- Very sad incident involving vehicle collision leading to the death of a pedestrian on A380

D. County and District Councillor Phillip Bullivant reported on the following issues in which he had direct involvement:

- Pension Committee
- 20 mph speed restriction for Newton Abbot
- Resumption of in-person meetings and those held online with video conferencing
- Persimmon Homes responsibility to develop accessible allotment site at Hele Park
- Development of Cultural Quarter in Newton Abbot

E. District Councillor Chris Jenks reported on the following issues in which he had direct involvement:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee review of 2025 Climate Emergency target

F. District Councillor Rob Hayes reported on the following issues in which he had direct involvement:

- Planning Committee

The Mayor reported that written reports from District Councillors Gordon and Mrs Jackie Hook had been previously circulated and tabled at the meeting, in their absence. There being no further questions from Councillors, the Mayor thanked the County and District Councillors for their reports as they provided a valuable insight into the issues within Newton Abbot.

85. **MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor reported on the recent engagements he had undertaken; in particular the Turf Cutting Ceremony at A382/A383 Houghton Barton and the importance the road network would have for the town. The Mayor praised the organisation and success of the Band Concert held on Sunday 18th July, despite the extreme heat the event was thoroughly enjoyed by all those who attended.

86. **MAYORAL/CLERK ACTIONS TAKEN ON MATTERS ARISING BETWEEN MEETINGS**

The Town Clerk reported on the following actions taken:

1. The contract for the final elements of the refurbishment of the War Memorial
2. The weeding and replanting of Victoria Gardens
3. Pre-Application Advice for Planning Application in respect of Museum Stores

Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED that the Council endorsed the actions of the Town Clerk, taken since the last meeting held on 2nd June 2021.

87. **REPORTS OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN**

The Mayor invited Chairmen to report on matters in relation to their Committees or Sub-committees during the period of COVID-19 Government restrictions.

A. Councillor Mrs Lesley Sheffield, Chairman of Community & Heritage Committee reported on the following issues:

- The Museum has now fully opened to the public from 19th July 2021 without the need to book but limiting numbers to 15 visitors; and
- Hosting first exhibition Summer Art from 23rd July 2021.

B. Councillor Colin Parker, Chairman of Finance & Audit Committee advised that Meeting of the Finance & Audit Committee and Internal Audit Report would be referred to later in the Meeting.

C. Councillor Mrs Ann Jones, Chairman of Planning Committee reported on the preparation of formal consultation on the Local Plan (Part 2) in advance of the deadline of 9th August 2021.

D. Councillor Mrs Carol Bunday, Chairman of the Events Sub-Committee reported on the following:

- The successful Band Concert held on 18th July and thanked Councillors for their support and assistance at the event;
- Preparations would be made for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022.

The Mayor thanked the Chairmen for their updates to the Council and acknowledged the continued work and efforts across all the Committees.

88. PROCEEDINGS OF COMMITTEES

- A. The Minutes of the Meeting of the **Planning Committee** held on 29th June 2021 as presented by the Chairman, Councillor Mrs A Jones, were received and approved;
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting of the **Finance & Audit Committee** held on 30th June 2021 as presented by the Chairman, Councillor C Parker, were received and approved with the exception of Minute 21/06(59); and
- C. The Minutes of the Meeting of the **Planning Committee** held on 20th July 2021 as presented by the Chairman, Councillor Mrs A Jones, were received and approved.

89. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS – FINAL 2020/21

Arising from Minute 21/06(59) the Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee proposed that the Internal Audit Final Report 2020/21 be approved and adopted.

RESOLVED that the Internal Audit – Final Report 2020/21 be hereby, approved and adopted.

90. POLICIES

The Mayor introduced the policies, previously circulated, drawing Members' attention to the key elements contained within them:

- a) Statement of Internal Control
- b) Council Risk Management
- c) Anti-Fraud & Corruption
- d) Business Continuity Plan

Following the review of the documents it was;

RESOLVED that the Policies listed a) to d) above be hereby approved and adopted subject to minor amendment.

91. ENVIRONMENT – WEED/LITTER

The Mayor invited Councillor Phil Bullivant to report his concerns on the condition of the pavements and kerbs across Newton Abbot.

Councillor Bullivant highlighted the importance of maintaining cleanliness and weed free streets within Newton Abbot but also his concern that areas of the town were falling short in this regard. Members discussed the responsibility of Devon County Council and Teignbridge District Council in maintenance and street cleansing but noted that the Town Council were doing a great deal to assist with the support of the two recently appointed Facilities Maintenance Officers. Following a lengthy discussion, it was:

RESOLVED that the matter would be referred to the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Forum for further consideration.

92. **LATE CORRESPONDENCE**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members of an invitation from Devon County Council to respond to consultation on the Bus Service Improvement Plan and in order to meet the deadline of 15th August 2021 that Members should respond directly.

93. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting of the Council would be held on Wednesday 22nd September 2021.

94. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC & PRESS**

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the following item 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 transacted.

95. **NEWTON'S PLACE**

The Mayor invited the Town Clerk to update Members on Newton's Place.

The Town Clerk informed the Council of matters relating to the former contractor H Pollard & Son and arrangements for the list of outstanding defects to be fulfilled.

RESOLVED that the verbal report from the Town Clerk to be noted.

Chairman (Mayor)