

High Wycombe Town Committee Minutes

Date: 23 June 2015

Time: 7.00 - 8.25 pm

PRESENT: Councillor A R Green
(in the Chair)

Councillors M Hussain JP, K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, R Farmer, S Graham, M Hanif, A E Hill, A Hussain, M Hussain, M E Knight, B E Pearce, M P Davy, M A Hashmi, R Raja, A Baughan, M Asif, H Bull, M Clarke, S K Raja and N J B Teesdale

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Ms J D Wassell

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2015 be agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3 UPDATE FROM HWBIDCO

The Chairman gave an apology on behalf of Oliver O'Dell, Chief Executive of the HWBIDCo, who was unable to attend the meeting.

In the absence of Mr O'Dell, the Chairman, as a Council appointed Director of the HWBIDCo, provided a briefing on the role of the HWBIDCo and how it was governed. He informed the Committee that the BIDCo was an independent, business-led organisation with a Board comprising appointed and elected directors, which had a fixed term mandate of five years, two of which remained. The forthcoming year would therefore involve an assessment of the legacy of the first BID term and a decision as to whether to pursue a second term and, if so, its priorities going forward. The Committee was informed that its input would be sought in relation to the following areas:

- How the Town Committee might consider financial support for some BIDCo activities (as background support so as not to jeopardise independence);
- What priorities the Town Committee might have with regard to an economic vision for the town centre and how these can align with the aspirations of the BIDCo;

- Where the BIDCo is seeking to drive strategic debates, how the Town Committee can contribute to the process, with particular reference to the Purple Flag and Thames and Chilterns in Bloom initiatives, and areas of work such as reducing empty commercial space and assisting in aligning diverse cultural interests through co-ordinated cultural activity.

The Chairman also reported that one of the BIDCo's initiatives, Frogfest 2015, had been very successful. As a result it was proposed to move next year's festival from Frogmoor to the High Street in order to increase capacity. The proposal was supported, and the Chairman undertook to pass the Committee's views on to the BIDCo.

The Chairman advised that Mr O'Dell would be invited to attend the Committee's next meeting in September to report further on the issues outlined above, and also provide the regular update on the work of the HWBIDCo.

4 UPDATE ON CEMETERY SITE OPTIONS

The Committee considered a report which presented an update on work which had been carried out to assess suggested sites for a new cemetery, following the site option appraisal reports which had been brought to the Committee in March, June and September 2014 and the Committee's recommendations in respect of those.

The Community Commissioning Manager reported that the existing cemetery was starting to reach capacity, and in particular a recent increase in the rate of child burials meant that the Snow Drop Garden was likely to reach capacity in the next three to four years. Non Church of England burials were likely to be full in the next 8 to 10 years, and Church of England burials in approximately 15 to 18 years.

The Committee therefore agreed that Option 2 (to do nothing) was not acceptable. In relation to Option 1 (carry out detailed feasibility work at Queensway), some Members expressed regret that a suitable site had not been found within the town, and felt that work should continue to try to identify a site within the town boundaries.

The following additional questions were raised, and the Community Commissioning Manager undertook to provide a response after the meeting:

- Would the unparished area have to purchase the Queensway site from WDC?
- How large is the site in relation to the current town cemetery, and how long would it be expected to last?
- What is the likely additional cost for the ransom strip and has Hazlemere Parish Council been approached to ascertain its view regarding sale?

Members highlighted the importance of a dedicated area for child burials, and recommended that officers prioritise this to ensure that a suitable site is ready before the Snow Drop Garden becomes full.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Option 1 to carry out detailed feasibility work at Queensway be recommended to Cabinet for approval and that Cabinet be recommended to approve the allocation of £20,000 from the Special Expenses reserves to fund the necessary feasibility work;
- (ii) That officers be asked to continue to investigate options for a site within the town boundaries;
- (iii) That officers be asked to investigate whether developer contributions (S106 or CIL) could be used towards the cost of the new cemetery;
- (iv) That officers be asked to report back to the Committee in the event that a suitable site for a new dedicated area for child burials is unable to be completed before the Snow Drop Garden becomes full.

5 EXPENDITURE OF RESERVES WORKING GROUP

Following a suggestion at the meeting held on 20 January 2015 that an informal working group should be established to consider the expenditure of the Town Committee's reserves, the Democratic Services Manager presented a report which suggested terms of reference for a working group.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Committee's composition had changed following the recent elections, and the new membership may not hold the same opinion in relation to establishing a working group.

It was also noted from the previous item that the construction of a new cemetery would involve the use of a proportion of reserves. After debate it was therefore agreed not to establish a working group, and that any decisions on use of reserves should continue to be considered by the full Committee.

RESOLVED: That the establishment of a working group not be supported and that proposals relating to the expenditure of reserves continue to be considered by the full Committee.

6 HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE - FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's draft work programme, looking ahead to January 2016, was presented for review.

The Chairman reported that a presentation from HWBIDCo would be added to the work programme for the next meeting (15 September).

It was agreed that an update on the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan should be scheduled for a future meeting, to include an update on the regeneration of Frogmoor.

It was agreed that an update from the market operator should be scheduled for a future meeting.

It was requested that the Annual Fees and Charges Review should also cover the issue of 7 day burial provision.

It was agreed that an information sheet outlining the current situation in relation to the possibility of establishing a Public Spaces Protection Order for the unparished area should be provided.

RESOLVED: That the forward work programme be noted and updated as outlined above.

7 INFORMATION SHEETS

RESOLVED: That Information Sheets 03/2015 Budgetary Control Report Out-Turn 2014/15 and 04/2015 HWTC Community Support Grants be noted.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Mr I Hunt

Democratic Services Manager

Ms E Lund

Senior Democratic Services Officer

Mrs S Randall

Community Commissioning Manager