

Congleton Town Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday,
3rd December 2015 in the Town Hall, Congleton.

PRESENT: Councillors

Mrs S Akers Smith
Mrs D Allen
Mrs A L Armitt
L D Barker
P Bates
R Boston
C Booth
P Broom
D T Brown
G R Edwards
G P Hayes
Mrs A M Martin
Mrs A E Morrison
Mrs J D Parry
Mrs E Wardlaw (Town Mayor)
G S Williams

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence. (Members are respectfully reminded of the necessity to submit any apology for absence in advance and to give a reason for non-attendance).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N Adams, J G Baggott, Mrs S A Holland and H Richards.

2. **MINUTES**

CTC/41/1516 RESOLVED- That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 29th October 2015 be approved and signed by the Mayor.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST**

Members are requested to declare both “non pecuniary” and “pecuniary” interests as early in the meeting as they become aware of it.

Cllrs P Bates, D T Brown, G P Hayes, Mrs E Wardlaw and G S Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in any matters related to Cheshire East Council.

4. **PRESENTATION TO THE TOWN MAYOR**

The Town Mayor was presented with a special edition of the Gideon Bible to commemorate her year in office by South Cheshire Gideon’s.

5. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

None.

6. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

i.) **Question from Mr G Goodwin**

When the Personnel Committee met on 12 November 2015 they agreed to accept a version of the minutes of the meeting of 27 October which made no reference to the statement made at the meeting by Councillor Broom. The council had previously published a copy of the minutes on its website which correctly included the statement from Councillor Broom

In agreeing to accept the minutes of a meeting, councillors are accepting that the minutes are a complete and accurate record of events at the meeting but, in this case, councillors voted to accept a copy of the minutes in the full knowledge that the minutes were incorrect and were not a complete and accurate record of events

The minutes of the Personnel Meeting are tonight before the full council for acceptance but, since it is now beyond dispute that the Broom statement was made at the meeting on 27 October but is not recorded or mentioned in the minutes proposed for acceptance would it be illegal for the full council to vote to accept the minutes as a complete and accurate record, and by doing so, would individual councillors be putting themselves in danger of actions being taken against them?

Response by the Town Mayor

The minutes of any of our meetings are meant to be formal records of official acts and decisions, that is, the resolutions that are made by our Committees and Council, not reports or speeches made by councillors.

Minutes should therefore be short as is consistent with clarity and accuracy, thus the minutes approved by the Personnel Committee at its meeting held on 12th November 2015, accurately recorded that a statement was made by Cllr Broom and need do no more.

Mr Goodwin read out a prepared statement to the council following the response to his question by the Town Mayor.

ii.) **Question from Mr J.S. Crowther**

I write regarding the unfounded allegations made by Councillor Peter Broom against Councillor Dawn Allen at the Personnel Committee of Tuesday 27th October 2015.

I feel very strongly that both Councillor Broom and Congleton Town Council should make a full and public apology to Councillor Allen.

Councillor Broom for making unfounded allegations with not a shred of evidence in a public meeting and the Town Council for publishing the unfounded allegations on Congleton Town Council website.

Response by Town Mayor

Firstly the Town council has an obligation to report statements made in a public open meeting by a Town Councillor. This does not suggest that we condone or support any such statement or comments made, nor are we in a position to offer apologies on behalf of what another has said.

The Town Council is concerned that when Councillors make speeches or statements then they should operate within existing policies, guidelines and relevant legislation and ensure that the Council's reputation is upheld and improved, and not adversely affected, this applies to all speeches and statements made by any councillor.

The Town Council does not condone any comment from any councillor which shows disrespect to others, whether that is made to another councillor, a council officer or indeed a member of the public.

iii.) **Question from Mr N Price**

1) – Regarding the Personnel committee meeting held on Tuesday 27th October 2015 in a none agenda item, there was a statement read out by Cllr. Broom and the minutes were published with the complete statement published in the minutes. Who wrote and published the official minutes

2) – A few days later another set of edited minutes were published with the statement removed. Only the Personnel committee can make changes to the minutes so who made the decision to edit the statement from the official minutes.

3)- On the third set of the minutes of the meeting held on 27th October there was no mention of the statement made by Cllr. Broom at all, “**Who made this decision to change them for the second time**”? Only a committee can change minutes, these where voted for at the Personnel meeting held on 12th November 2015 proposed and seconded by Cllr’s Edwards and Martyn even though the chairman said he had asked the Cllr. responsible for the statement whether he wanted to read it in part 1 or 2.

My overall question is as these minutes can only be changed by the next Personnel committee who are the staff/councillors who gave permission to make the changes to the Personnel committee minutes.

Response by Town Mayor

Minutes of any meeting of the Town Council are placed on the website prior to approval and are draft minutes only.

The accuracy of draft minutes, including any amendment(s) made to them, shall be confirmed by resolution and shall be signed by the chairman of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate. In other words it is for the Committee to determine what it regards as the appropriate record of the meeting which in the case of the minutes dated 27th October it did, having considered two versions, both of which were factually correct.

The draft minutes of the Personnel Committee originally placed on the website were amended at the request of Cllr Allen who asked for the statement in question to be removed, this request came via the Town Mayor.

The Personnel Committee then considered which of two versions of the statement should be included in the approved version of the minutes. Once again Cllr Allen was asked which version she preferred and indicated that her preference was for the abridged version which was duly voted upon and the minutes approved.

It is only when minutes have been approved and duly signed by the Chairman of the Committee that they cannot be subsequently altered.

7. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Mayor drew attention to the various engagements that she and the Deputy Town Mayor had fulfilled since the last Council meeting.

8. **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

CTC/42/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 15th October 2015 and 5th November 2015 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

9. **COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT & SERVICES COMMITTEE**

CTC/43/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1st October 2015 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

10. **FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE**

CTC/44/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2015 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

11. **TOWN HALL COMMITTEE**

CTC/45/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2015 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

12. **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

CTC/46/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2015 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

13. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent matters raised.

14. **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCILLORS' REPORT**

Councillor D T Brown reported that the government has announced that there will be considerable investment in the North West. There is to be an extra £1.5 million for Alderly Park and an extra £4 million of funding for a research centre located there.

There is to be a further allocation of funding for schools with Cheshire East expected to have another £4 million.

In the near future principal councils will be able to control and retain their own business rates.

Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Halton have bid for a growth fund of £1.2 billion and the HS2 project going through Crewe will result in a £5 billion project.

15. **YOUTH COMMITTEE**

There were no members of the Youth Committee present.

16. **CHRISTMAS OFFICE HOURS**

A report outlining the Christmas and New Year office opening and closing times was considered.

CTC/47/1516 RESOLVED that the report was received and noted.

17. **BUDGET & PRECEPT 2016-17**

The budget report for 2016-17 was considered. It was pointed out that the increase in the precept would amount to £11 annually on a band D property or 21p per week.

18. **BUDGET EXPENDITURE POWERS 2016-17**

Expenditure	Power	£
Police Community Support Officers	P.O.C.	47,200
Other Grants and Donations	P.O.C.	21,483
Citizens Advice Bureau	P.O.C.	15,000
Christmas Lights	P.O.C.	9,000
Congleton Community Projects	P.O.C.	16,000
Town Hall 150 th Anniversary	P.O.C.	5,000
Museum Grant	P.O.C.	4,500

As the Town Council has adopted the Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011, ss 1-8 any agreed expenditure in the budget, identified above can be approved via this power.

CTC/48/1516 RESOLVED that:-

1. That the revenue and capital budget for 2016-17 as set out in Appendix 1 of the Budget report, be approved.
2. That the budget expenditure powers be approved.
3. A precept of £784,342 be approved for 2016-17.

19. **HONORARY BURGESS**

A proposal to invite a distinguished former member of the Town Council, Mr. Denis Murphy to become an Honorary Burgess was considered.

CTC/49/1516 RESOLVED that:-

1. The council approve the title of Honorary Burgess of Mr. D. Murphy
2. To invite Mr. D. Murphy to become a member of Community, Environment and Services Committee as a lay member, which confers no voting rights.

20. **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

A new Social Media Policy was presented to the members for consideration.

CTC/50/1516 RESOLVED that the policy be approved and adopted into the constitution.

21. **PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY**

The concept design for Swan Bank, Festival Square and the Pedestrian Area was considered.

CTC/51/1516 RESOLVED that:-

1. The concept design be approved in principle.
2. The internal Public Realm support group consisting of Councillor Mrs. D S Allen, P Bates, G R Edwards, Mrs. A M Martin, Mrs. J D Parry and J MacArthur, D McGifford and S. Foster of the Partnership, meet to consider the selection of appropriate street furniture and lighting.

Mrs E Wardlaw
TOWN MAYOR