

Congleton Town Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday,
10th July 2014 in the Town Hall, Congleton.

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs D S Allen
 L D Barker
 P. Bates
 G Baxendale
 Ms. L Bours
 R I Brightwell
 J S Crowther
 G R Edwards
 Mrs S A Holland
 Mrs A M Martin
 D Murphy (Town Mayor)
 D A Parker
 J. D Parry
 N T Price
 Mrs E Wardlaw
 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 Councillors D T Brown, G P Hayes and Miss R K Williams.

2. **MINUTES**

CTC/13/1415 RESOLVED- That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 29th May 2014 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 G Baxendale declared a non-pecuniary interest in any matters related to Cheshire East Borough Council.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

None.

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

Question from Member of the Public – Mr G Goodwin

Question to the Town Mayor, Mr D Murphy

At the onset of the debate on my complaint on 17th April 2014 the Mayor asked if any Councillor had spoken to me prior to the complaint being heard and debated at the meeting of 17 April since any such contact could require the Councillor to be excluded from the debate and vote. Three Councillors correctly confirmed that they had been in email contact with me because, as three of my ward Councillors, I had made them aware that I was making an official complaint and advising them of my reasons for making the complaint. Since I had not met with any of the Councillors, there was no reason for any of the Councillors to be excluded from the debate

I would, firstly ask why no Councillor was asked if they had met with the Town Clerk to discuss the complaint prior to the meeting since I have now established that one of my ward Councillors met with the Town Clerk to seek clarification on aspects of the complaint and that the Town Clerk spoke to the Council Leader on the subject whilst in the presence of my ward Councillor and, in fact, the council leader then appeared at the Town Hall and continued to discuss the matter, again in the presence of my ward Councillor.

Secondly I would ask the Council Leader for his comments on the propriety of the discussion he had with the Town Clerk and why he did not advise the Councillors at the meeting that such a discussion had taken place particularly since I had already asked the Mayor if any such meetings had taken place and had received assurances in writing that this had not been the case.

Finally, a meeting took place at the Town Hall on the morning of 14th March 2014, the participants being the Town Clerk and Councillors Hayes, Edwards, Murphy and Brown where, I believe. My complaint was also discussed.. Would the Council Leader confirm or deny that any aspect of my complaint was discussed at that meeting

Response by the Town Mayor

Thank you for your question which I will respond to on behalf of the Town Council.

First of all Councillors are well aware of the rules surrounding declarations of interest and do not need any further prompting on this issue from the Mayor.

Insofar as the issue you raise relating to your ward councillor speaking to the Town Clerk and the Leader of the Council is concerned, this related to advice about process and had nothing to do with the substance of the complaint whatsoever.

The Councillor concerned mentioned that he had been in discussion with you about the complaint you made against the Town Clerk and asked advice on whether he should declare this matter at the Town Council meeting; he was advised that he should and that was the end of the discussion. Advice on process and procedure does not have to be declared as an interest, because it is not.

Response by the Town Mayor continued...

The meeting that you refer to on the 14th March 2014 is a regular private meeting that takes place monthly between the Town Clerk, Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council. The meeting was not called to discuss the complaint against the Town Clerk, but, during the meeting which covered a range of subjects, the then Mayor mentioned that a complaint had been received and that it was his intention to refer the matter to the Town Council as set out in the Complaints Procedure.

This information once again merely confirmed the Council would be following the process as set out in the Constitution.

Mr Goodwin your complaint has had a fair and proper hearing at the Town Council meeting of the 17th April 2014 and it was determined to be unfounded. Insofar as the Town Council is concerned the matter must now end.

As previously pointed out, you have wasted an enormous amount of both officer and Council time on erroneous matters most of which have no merit or foundation and are certainly of no interest to the wider public, this is not something that we are going to continue to tolerate.

Mr Goodwin was given the opportunity to ask a supplementary question, but, the issues he raised did not meet the criteria set out in clause 73h of the Constitution.

A motion to have an injunction taken out against Mr Goodwin was considered, but, this was not taken further because of insufficient support.

6. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

7. PLANNING COMMITTEE

CTC/14/1415 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd April and 22nd May 2014 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

8. TOWN HALL COMMITTEE

CTC/15/1415 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2014 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

9. COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

CTC/16/1415 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30th March 2014 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

10. **URGENT ITEMS**

Cllr Ms L Bours raised the matter of supporting a promising young swimmer, Aysha Epcim who requires financial assistance to attend Plymouth College where she has been offered a 50% bursary.

Cllr Bours requested that the Town Council and other bodies help sponsor and support Aysha.

11. **YOUTH COMMITTEE**

CTC/17/1415 RESOLVED that the minutes of the Junior Council meeting held on 10th June and the Youth Committee Meeting held on 17th June 2014 be received.

12. **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The final update of the Internal Report for 2013-14 produced by Auditing Solutions was considered, as was the notion of re-appointing Auditing Solutions Ltd as our auditors for 2014-15.

CTC/18/1415 RESOLVED that:-

1. The Internal report of 2013-14 be received and noted that there were no corrective actions identified.
2. Auditing Solutions Ltd to be re-appointed as the Town Council Auditors for 2014-15.

13. **LEISURE FACILITIES**

A letter concerning the potential redevelopment of the Leisure Centre in Congleton submitted by Congleton Partnership was discussed.

CTC/19/1415 RESOLVED to acknowledge receipt of the letter.

14. **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL REPRESENTATION**

A letter was considered from G F Waller concerning a proposed reduction in the number of Cheshire East Borough Councillors by restructuring the warding arrangement to single member wards.

CTC/20/1415 RESOLVED that the proposal to reduce the number of Cheshire East Councillors by changing warding arrangements be rejected.

15. **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Correspondence from Cllr Michael Jones, Leader of Cheshire East Council, concerning Neighbourhood Plans were considered.

CTC/21/1415 RESOLVED that the correspondence be received and noted.

16. **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The notion of the Town Council producing a Neighbourhood Plan was discussed at some length.

CTC/22/1415 RESOLVED that:-

1. That the Town Council start to examine the notion of whether or not to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.
2. A meeting of the Strategy Working Group to be called urgently to discuss the notion of a Neighbourhood Plan in more detail.

D Murphy

TOWN MAYOR