

Congleton Town Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday 4th April 2019 Town Hall Congleton

PRESENT: Councillors

Mrs S Akers Smith (Town Mayor)
Mrs D S Allen
C H Booth
G R Edwards
G P Hayes
Mrs A M Martin
Mrs J D Parry
M A Walker
G S Williams

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

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mrs A L Armitt, J G Baggott, L D Barker, D T Brown, R Boston Bates, Mrs S A Holland, Mrs A E Morrison and Mrs E Wardlaw

2. **Minutes**

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st February 2019.

CTC/55/1819 RESOLVED that the minutes of the emergency meeting of the Council held on 21st February 2019 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.

Councillors G P Hayes and G S Williams declared a non- pecuniary interest in any matters relating to Cheshire East Council.

4. **Outstanding Actions**

None.

5. **Questions from Members of the Public**

To receive any questions from Members of the Public including those received in writing 7 days prior to the meeting.

Questions were received from Mrs S Firkin, Mr R Walton and Mr A Pimlott -see appendix A

6. 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.

7. Community, Environment & Services Committee

CTC/56/1819 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 31st January 2019 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

8. Finance & Policy Committee

CTC/57/1819 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14th February 2019 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

9. Personnel Committee

CTC/58/1819 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2018 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

10. Planning Committee

CTC/59/1819 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th February and 7th March 2019 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

11. Calendar of Meeting Dates

To approve the proposed calendar of meeting dates for 2019/20.

CTC/60/1819 RESOLVED to approve the calendar of meeting dates for 2019/20

12. Business Plan

To approve the 2019/20 Business Plan

CTC/61/1819 RESOLVED to approve the Business Plan for 2019/20

13. Neighbourhood Plan

To receive an update from the Chief Officer on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan.

CTC/62/1819 RESOLVED to receive the verbal update from the Chief Officer who advised that the indicative timescale for the referendum would be late summer 2019

14. Urgent Items

Members may raise urgent items but no discussion or decisions may be taken at the meeting.

There were no urgent items raised.



15. Cheshire East Councillors' Reports

To suspend Standing Orders to allow Councillors from the principal authority to report on relevant issues and to receive questions from members.

Councillor Williams provided updates on CEC award winning Highways schemes in Crewe and on improvements to the Congleton to Buxton Road – A54

16. Youth Committee

a) To deal with Questions from Members of the Youth Committee present at the meeting.

There were no questions from Members of the Youth Committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S Akers Smith', written in a cursive style.

**Cllr Mrs S Akers Smith
(Town Mayor)**

Appendix A : Public Questions

Question 1 Mrs S Firkin re Mountview Care Home

It is now 18 months since Cheshire East Council announced that it would cease providing adult day care services at Mountview.

Under pressure from the loyal body of carers whose relatives attend Mountview, Cheshire East Council agreed it would not end the day care service until it had found a new facility that could both host the service and meet the complex and varying needs of its users. 18 months on and CEC have still not succeeded in coming up with a suitable plan. I suspect they now know what we have known all along, that staying at Mountview was always the best option.

Whilst all of us who are involved are grateful for the fact that day care at Mountview continues, we call on the councillors of Congleton to join us in calling upon Cheshire East Council to remove the stress and uncertainty hanging over the users, their carers and staff by reversing their decision to close the building, and instead choose to invest in the facilities and services that are so valued by Congleton residents.

It would seem that Cheshire East Council wanted us to leave but had no plan of how to do it! I wish to ask Councillors present here tonight if they will use their influence to ask Cheshire East Council to put aside this futile quest for an alternative to Mountview and instead find a way to invest in the asset that they own for the future benefit of the people of Congleton.

Response Through previous meetings with yourself and Cheshire East Council I hope that you feel that we have been supportive in the past in trying to find a local solution for the continuation of the service currently provided at Mountview. With regards to the current situation we find it totally unacceptable that a local solution has not been found.

Like yourself we were advised that an option was almost in place and only recently we indirectly found out that this had fallen through. May I suggest that we once again organise a meeting with yourself and the relevant Cheshire East Officers and Portfolio holder to discuss the points you have raised and to establish what Cheshire Easts intentions are to achieve a satisfactory outcome for families that need and value this service provided at Mountview.

Outcome / Action

It was agreed to hold the proposed meeting as soon as possible, and to be organised by Congleton Town Council

Question 2 Mr R Walton - Brexit

With so much uncertainty over Brexit, as a local resident and Council Tax payer, could I ask if the Council has felt it necessary to conduct a risk analysis of what may happen to their provision of services if there is a no deal, disorderly Brexit. If so, what provisions have been made to maintain continuity in service delivery. It may be that Congleton Town Council hasn't felt obliged to carry out this contingency planning, but both I and many other residents would welcome this clarification. As you were not able to attend the meeting in person, I hope that you will find the following answer satisfactory. If you have any follow-up questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Response

Like businesses across the country, Congleton Town Council needs to remain flexible and adaptable to change. The Town Council is here to serve the people in Congleton and where ever possible we use local suppliers for goods and services that are needed in order to deliver services. We have contacted our key suppliers and currently they are not anticipating any delivery issues. Our commercial partners who supply the catering for events at the Town Hall have strong local contacts and are also not anticipating any supply or delivery problems that would affect their ability to cater for events at the Town Hall.

Only one member of staff is not a UK national, and we do not anticipate any recruitment or staff retention issues. As members of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and Cheshire Association of Local Councils (CHALC) we will receive updated information on changes to legislation which may affect us and we will adapt accordingly.

We do not have significant investments or investment overseas and the funds that we do hold are in triple A rated accounts. Any volatility of currency should not have a significant impact on the Town Council.

As a Town Council we are as confident as we can be that local people will be able to expect the same level of service from the Town Council as they currently enjoy, whatever the outcome of Brexit. Of course we will keep ourselves updated of the news and take advice on any changes that are required or would be best practice, but currently have not needed to put contingencies in place.

The Town Council is required to carry out a Business Risk Assessment annually (Audit and Accountancy regulations 2015). The current Business Risk Assessment was approved by Finance and Policy Committee in February 2019. When updating the latest Business Risk Assessment it was not thought necessary to specifically refer to Brexit as it was not felt that Brexit (with or without a deal) would have any direct impact on the Council or its undertakings.

I hear about the apparent lack of enthusiasm that the Chief Officer encountered when trying to discuss the possibility of Cheshire East devolving control of our Market to Congleton Town Council. Since this statement by the Chief Officer, could I ask the Council if there have been any further developments in connection with our Market. In addition, could I ask what further actions the Council can take to speed this process up.

The market is of vital importance to me. I feel from the voices and opinions from our local market the traders are seeking some clarity of future intentions. I strongly feel control needs to be passed back to the Town Council. I also feel the market requires urgent regeneration, as there are many stalls roofs in a poor state of repair and constantly leaking on prospective customers, The back drop to the market is derelict properties and barbed wire fences. Despite the very smart signage coming into the Town from all access roads, the market is a total let down to any potential visitors, We are listed as a Charter Market Town established in 1272. Today sadly falls far short of expectations.

I would like to see these points addressed as I feel an improved regenerated Market & Leisure complex would increase traffic into our wonderful Town Centre. As a retailer based in the Town Centre it is of great importance that we have an inspirational Charter Market to improve overall retail within Congleton Town”

Question 3.

Adrian Pimlott Congleton Market

I hear about the apparent lack of enthusiasm that the Chief Officer encountered when trying to discuss the possibility of Cheshire East devolving control of our Market to Congleton Town Council. Since this statement by the Chief Officer, could I ask the Council if there have been any further developments in connection with our Market? In addition, could I ask what further actions the Council can take to speed this process up?

The market is of vital importance to me. I feel from the voices and opinions from our local market, the traders are seeking some clarity of future intentions. I strongly feel control needs to be passed back to the Town Council. I also feel the market requires urgent regeneration, as there are many stalls, roofs in a poor state of repair and constantly leaking on prospective customers. The backdrop to the market is derelict properties and barbed wire fences. Despite the very smart signage coming into the Town from all access roads, the market is a total let down to any potential visitors. We are listed as a Charter Market Town established in 1272. Today sadly falls far short of expectations.

I would like to see these points addressed as I feel an improved regenerated Market & Leisure complex would increase traffic into our wonderful Town Centre. As a retailer based in the Town Centre it is of great importance that we have an inspirational Charter Market to improve overall retail within Congleton Town”

Response

I am pleased to advise that the Chief Officer, on behalf of the Town Council Working Group, has started to receive information from Cheshire East Council. This relates to specific financial information that has been requested to enable the working group to look at a business case for the potential devolvement of the Market to the Town Council

As previously reported, the Town Council has no expertise in running markets and no available resource, on that basis the option that is most likely to be considered by the Town Council is for there to be a consortium of traders working together to achieve their goal, this is something the traders have previously stated as their preferred way forward.

The condition of the stalls and roof is not something that has specifically been brought to our attention by the traders, the asset is Cheshire East Council's, so this is something we will discuss as part of our ongoing investigations, as we will need clarity on the maintenance responsibilities for the market area.

We share with you your concerns with regards to the condition of the backdrop which is tied into the stalling plans of the Scarborough Development Group, who are proving very difficult to liaise with at the present time. The regeneration of the overall area has been, and continues to be, a major concern for the Town Council and is something we will continue to pursue through Cheshire East Council.