

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 1st August 2019

PRESENT:

Committee members:

Martin Amies
Paul Duffy
Suzy Firkin
Margaret Gartside
Amanda Martin
Jean Parry
Mark Rogan
Kay Wesley (Chair)

Non-Committee members

Suzie Akers Smith, Russell Chadwick, Robert Hemsley, James Smith and Robert Moreton

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Committee members Councillors Dawn Allen and Denis Murphy, and Non-committee members Cllrs Robert Douglas and Sally Ann Holland (Town Mayor).

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 27th June 2019 as a correct record.

CES/11/1920 Resolved to receive the minutes from the meeting held on 27th June 2019 as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

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

There were no declarations of interest from Committee Members.

4. Outstanding Actions

Note that these actions are covered in Agenda Item 11 - Updates paper.

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.

- Letter from Congleton Pride Group (Richard Walton)
- Question on the green space at the back of the Town Hall (Val Scaresbrook)
- Question on Bromley Woods (Val Scaresbrook)

See appendix A below

6. Cheshire Police

To receive and consider a verbal report from a representative of Cheshire Police on Policing matters affecting Congleton.

Sergeant Keith Graham – Cheshire Police provided updates on:

- Crime rates
- Anti Social Behaviour
- Homelessness
- Updates on localised flooding

See Appendix B below

7. Floral Arrangement Working Group

CES/12/1920 Resolved to receive the minutes of the Floral Arrangement Working Group held on 25th June 2019.

8. Sheldon Avenue - Bins and Parking

To discuss a report and presentation from Cllrs Suzie Akers Smith and Rob Moreton requesting support for resolving issues in this area.

CES/13/1920 Resolved that Congleton Town Council Officers would arrange a site meeting as a matter of urgency with the Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Police, Environmental Health and ward Councillors.

9. Ruby's Fund – Update on the Sensory Centre and Appeal for Help

To discuss a report and receive a presentation from Ruby's fund on the imminent sale of the premises.

CES/14/1920 Resolved to write a letter to the Finance Portfolio Holder at Cheshire East Council supporting Ruby's Fund request for a commercial loan to facilitate the acquisition of their current premises.

10. Congleton Christmas Lights 2019

To receive a report on the plans for Congleton Christmas Lights and to agree a lead member to join the Christmas Team.

CES/15/1920 Resolved to receive the report and noted that Cllrs Paul Duffy and Russell Chadwick would become members of the Christmas Team working group.

11. Updates Paper from June 27th 2019

To receive an updates paper highlighting issues raised at the previous Community, Environment & Services Committee meeting.

CES/16/1920 Resolved to receive the updates report.

12. Health and Well-Being Working Group

CES/17/1920 Resolved to receive the minutes from the Health and Well-Being Working Group from 20th June 2019.

13. Congleton Market Working Group

To receive an update from the Congleton Market Working Group.

CES/18/1920 Resolved to receive the update from the Chief Officer who advised that communication was ongoing with the Market Traders about a potential Partnership Arrangement for its future management. The latest communication was sent on 23rd July 2019, requesting names for 3 selected representatives from the Traders and clarity about who they think should be responsible for the various aspects of managing the market.

14. Congleton in Bloom

To receive an update on the North West in Bloom judging day, which took place on 25th July 2019.

CES/19/1920 Resolved to receive the update from the Chief Officer who advised that the judging went well and the results would be announced on the 1st November 2019. Councillors gave thanks to the support provided by the volunteers.

**Cllr Kay Wesley
(Chair)**

Appendix A – Item 5 Questions from members of the Public

1. LETTER OF THANKS FROM CONGLETON PRIDE ... 22 JULY 2019

Dear Councillors,

On behalf of both the Trustees and Organising Committee of Congleton Pride, I would like to pass on our most heartfelt thanks to Congleton Town Council for their unwavering support in delivering Congleton's first LGBT+ event on Sat 20th July.

Not only was your financial support the cornerstone of our ability to stage such an event, but it was also the enthusiasm and ideas of so many of your team, so freely given, that was instrumental in allowing us to hold what we hope will become an annual event.

In thanking specific people you always run the risk of offending those who don't get a personal mention, especially when so many people are involved, and so apologies in advance if I have missed anyone out.

I would however very much like to thank the outstanding contribution made by Jackie Macarthur throughout the project, Cllr Sally Anne Holland (Mayor) for officially opening our day and then staying with us all day braving near monsoon conditions, and to our Town Crier (Paul Bates) who not only added colour to the opening ceremony, but was an incredible source of ideas and support throughout.

I would finally like to acknowledge the support of the people of Congleton. The support we received from the whole community was outstanding and moved us all deeply and they really did themselves proud. It is one thing to call ourselves the small town with the big heart, but quite another to demonstrate it.

Well on Sat, we did just that!! The town was incredible.....

Kind regards,

Mr Richard Walton,

Trustee-Congleton Pride-Congleton Pride Charitable Trust

RESPONSE: - This letter was received with thanks and the Congleton Pride Group congratulated on the success of their event.

2. LAND AT THE BACK OF THE TOWN HALL - From Val Scaresbrook

The long established shortcut between the police station and library/bus station in Congleton was removed when the old council offices in Congleton were demolished. This despite the expense of a top-up fence being installed to prevent people falling or jumping into the Fairground car park, although I don't know if anyone has ever done this. The shortcut was not a public right of way, but used without let or hindrance for at least 30 years (that's how long I used it). So pedestrians are disadvantaged by having to walk three sides of the square along very uneven paving, unless they want to vault or limbo the wooden rail fence. Cyclists cannot ride/push their bikes along the shortcut either, and as Market Square is one way, cannot cycle around legally.

Can the town council press Cheshire East Council (CEC) to restore this valuable amenity to the public? CEC states that vulnerable road users (i.e. pedestrians, disabled, cyclists) are at the heart of all they do, but now we have this obstacle. One option would be to apply for public right of way status so this route is added to the definitive map. Can the town council initiate the application? I believe it only has to gather evidence from a small number of people who have used the route regularly and over a number of years without let, hindrance or a charge.

REPOSE: - Dear Mrs Scaresbrook

Thank you for bringing this issue to the committee, we can certainly look into the points you have raised with Cheshire East Council to understand their position on this matter and will feedback to you accordingly what we believe to be the next steps.

3. BROMLEY FARM WOODS - From Val Scaresbrook

There is a heavily used network of paths and steps in Bromley woods between Dane-in-Shaw Brook and Bromley housing estate. I believe these woods are owned by the town council.

These paths were edged where necessary, and steps cut in steeper sections, many years ago and the timber is now at the end of its life. Soil is washing down onto the surface and where edging boards have rotted, the path surface is washing downhill, so the original level paths now have a camber to them making them narrower and more difficult to use. It is a pity that the original work on these paths is not being maintained as it is a case of a stitch in time saves nine - are there plans to do anything here please? If not, then can some plans be implemented, and in a timely manner?

This area is an informal leisure area giving access to the brook, the SSSI meadows and the Biddulph Valley Way and is a much valued resource for local residents who can just walk out 'into the green' for their mental and physical wellbeing. Beyond the woods, the areas are cared for by CE rangers so the contrast in maintenance levels is noticeable.

RESPONSE:

Bromley Farm Woods are owned by Cheshire East Council (CEC).

The wood has a network of paths through it with a main path. This was put in around 15 years ago as a joint project of Bromley Farm Community Development Trust, Congleton Borough Council, Groundwork Cheshire and Plus Dane Group. In the last couple of years some remedial work was carried out by Congleton Town Council of the edging boards paid for by Cheshire East.

There is some further works to additional edging boards that is now required. There are a number of areas where this is becoming urgent to ensure integrity of the path and safety of users. Bromley Farm Community Development Trust has raised this with George Broughton. These type of works would fall under the remit of ANSA.

Bromley Farm Community Development Trust were instrumental in creating a safe walkway through the woods which has a number of links to Biddulph Valley Way. This is a popular walking area especially for residents of the Bromley Farm neighbourhood, an area of multiple deprivation. Bromley Farm Woods project was the starting point of all my community work now.

Bromley Farm Trust has asked CEC for some further remedial work to be carried out and for a proper maintenance plan to be put in place for the whole site, not just the paths. When the paths were put in, a report was compiled which included maintenance and it helped to get the area protected as a site of biological importance.

Streetscape carry out litter picks, as does the Trust. Streetscape trim the path edges once a year and the Trust has carried out path clearance, particularly in the autumn, but there is no formal schedule.

Following your question, the Town Council will also contact Cheshire East Council along the lines of those given in the Bromley Farm Community Trust questions.

Appendix B – Item 6 Cheshire Police

Burglaries/Vehicle Crime – no noticeable crime spikes in the last month

Drugs – no warrants executed since the last council meeting. Covert operations on going. 1 noticeable arrest of a male linked to County Lines in Congleton resulted in a 3yr 8mth prison sentence

Anti-Social Behaviour – no noticeable increases since schools broke up for the summer holidays. Aware there are 2-3 homeless people frequenting the town centre area who will be dealt with as and when incidents reported. They have all been offered accommodation by Cheshire Homeless Shelter but all have refused for their own reasons.

Flooding – all roads now open, no major issues in the area