

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 7th November 2019

Please note – These are draft minutes and will not be ratified until the next meeting of this Committee on 30th January 2020

PRESENT:

Committee members:

Martin Amies
Suzy Firkin
Margaret Gartside
Amanda Martin
Denis Murphy (Deputy Mayor)
Jean Parry
Kay Wesley (Chair)

Non-Committee members

Suzie Akers Smith (from item 14)
James Smith

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Committee members Councillors Dawn Allen Paul Duffy and Mark Rogan and non-committee member Sally Ann Holland (Town Mayor).

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 26th September 2019 as a correct record.

CES/29/1920 Resolved to receive the minutes from the meeting held on 26th September 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.

Cheshire East Councillor Denis Murphy declared an interest via CEC and also for item 17 as a Rotarian.

4. Outstanding Actions

Note that these actions are covered in Agenda Item 7 - 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. There were questions from three members of the public

- a) John Whitelock – re lack of response from the 27th June questions around the confusion between the roles of police and Cheshire East Enforcement Officers regards to parking, and the offer for volunteer help with enforcing clear way forward policies at school gates.
- b) Barry Speed – Questions on:
 - Actions to meet the target of planting 30,000 trees in next 5 years
 - Reporting mechanisms for Streetscape.
 - Lack of reports from Congleton in Bloom
 - Climate Change Emergency – who is delivering?
- c) Maurice Walker - concern about lack of action taken to clean up the parking area by the boat on River Dane near the two bears Roundabout/Aldi.

The full questions and the responses can be seen in Appendix A. Responses were handed to Barry Speed who was present, and will be sent to Mr Whitelock and Mr Walker.

6. Cheshire Police

Received a verbal report from a representative of Cheshire Police on Policing matters affecting Congleton.

PC Helen Hood from Cheshire Police provided updates on:

- 1. Operation Headhunted. Police request for community home watch/WhatsApp groups/Congleton Chat's Back to report CCTV/sightings of anyone trying cars or acting suspiciously around parked vehicles to notify the Police.
- 2. Anti-Social Behaviour issues on Woolston Avenue have subsided with one offender referred to Divert
- 3. Homelessness – 5 permanent sleepers in the town centre reduced to one. The final rough sleeper is now interested in accommodation and this should be sorted imminently.
- 4. Operation Storyteller – police operation in December 2019 targeting sexual offences in vehicles in the laybys on the Macclesfield Road.

7. Updates Paper from 26th September CES Committee

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

CES/30/1920 Resolved to note the Updates report

8. Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group

To receive the notes of the ASB Working Group held on 29th August 2019.

CES/31/1920 Resolved to receive the minutes of the Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group

9. Health and Wellbeing Working Group

To receive the notes of the Health and Wellbeing Group held on the 25th July and 3rd October 2019.

CES/32/1920 Resolved to receive the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Group

10. Mental Health Plans and Aspirations for Congleton

To receive a report on the proposed future working plans of the Health and Well Being Group.

CES/33/1920 Resolved to receive the report and support the work proposed by the Health and Wellbeing Group and ensure the work stream is included in the emerging business plan.

11. Climate Change Emergency Work on an Action Plan

To receive a report on actions related to the Climate Change Emergency declared on 19th September 2019.

CES/34/1920 Resolved to support the following actions:

- a) Officers to investigate carrying out an environmental audit into the Town Hall and Town Hall assets and work practices, with a paper to Finance and Policy if necessary for funding purposes.
- b) To support Congleton Green in bringing forward further measures to support the Climate Change Emergency
- c) To organise Sustainable Living in Congleton (SLIC) training for councillors and staff early in 2020.

12. Congleton Integrated Transport Update

To receive an update on the plans for creating a more integrated transport strategy for Congleton

CES/35/1920 Resolved to form an Integrated Transport Working Group to develop proposals and actions based on the items listed in the paper and report back to a future CES committee. Councillors on the group to include Cllrs Amanda Martin, Suzy Firkin, Margaret Gartside, Kay Wesley and Suzie Akers Smith.

13. Speed Indication Devices and Speed Cameras

To receive a proposal to purchase Speed Indication Devices to improve speed awareness in Congleton.

CES/36/1920 Resolved to support the Lower Heath Speed Watch request for a Speed Indicator Device that collects data, is transferrable to other sites and solar panelled. To recommend to Finance and Policy that a SID is procured from SIDSigns for £1382 plus Vat subject to recommendations from current users of this model.

14. Congleton Makers Market

To consider a report on the Maker's Market in Congleton.

CES/37/1920 Resolved for the Makers Market to continue in Congleton on the last Saturday of the month, with continued efforts to do whatever is reasonably possible to accommodate the needs of all the Congleton shops and businesses.

15. Congleton In Bloom Working Group

To receive an update on the results of the North West in Bloom competition (announced on the 31st October and 1st November 2019) and Cheshire Community Pride competition announced on the 4th November 2019.

CES/38/1920 Resolved to note the update given on the success of the In Bloom team in 2019 and to congratulate and thank the volunteer teams and streetscape staff for all their hard work and efforts.

16. Penny Farthing proposal for the Park Lane Roundabout

To receive an update on the Penny Farthing sculpture proposed for the Park Lane Roundabout.

CES/39/1920 Resolved to support the project to obtain a Penny Farthing sculpture for the Park Lane roundabout and for officers to proceed with gaining legal agreements and funding.

17. Future of Fair in Congleton

To consider a report on the frustrations that fun fairs have accessing Cheshire East sites.

CES/40/1920 Resolved to write to Cheshire East Council expressing concerns about the impact that their additional consultancy charges to check paperwork are having on the ability to bring fair rides into Cheshire East for either community or commercial purposes.

**Cllr Kay Wesley
(Chair)**

Appendix A

Responses from the Public for CES Committee on the 7th November 2019

1. Question from John Whitelock

The Town Council has received a letter from John Whitelock concerned about the lack of formal response and a proper answer to his two questions raised at CES in June. One question was around the confusion between what traffic offences the Police deal with and the traffic offence that Cheshire East Civil Enforcement Officers deal with and whether there was a way the two organisations could work together more closely. The second question was around if volunteers were able to get involved in volunteering for the school clearways programme run by Cheshire East.

Mr Whitelock has written to express concern that other than hearing that the questions had been passed on, he has not received an answer to the questions and the lack of a response was not included in the updates or matter arising so has left him feeling in limbo waiting for a final response.

Answer: Firstly I would like to apologise to Mr Whitelock for the Town Council not getting him a timely response and keeping on top of checking for responses. I am pleased to say that we have now received more facts from both Cheshire East Council and the Police and a detailed response will be sent.

To summarise this response, although the Police and Cheshire East Civil Enforcement officers do collaborate on high priority problem areas, such as at school parking, they have different powers. CEC Civil Enforcement Officers deal with civil issues whilst the Police deal with criminal issues such as obstruction, dangerous and unsafe parking, and moving traffic violations. All the duties that the Civil Enforcement Officers can deal with can be seen at online https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/car_parks_and_parking/penalty_charges/parking_contraventions/parking_contraventions.aspx

The Police need to balance the risk with their resources available and react accordingly. The Civil Enforcement Officers are not able to step in and perform criminal parking duties which are not a high priority for the police.

Regards the offer to volunteer at the school gates, we have been told by the Enforcement Team that this is not possible. Only employees of Cheshire East who have been trained as Civil Enforcement Officers and who have been trained and DBS enhanced checked carry out this work. In order to issue a fine the contravention has to have been witnessed by a Civil Enforcement Officer and they are not able to act on 3rd party evidence. However CEC is currently recruiting for Five Civil Enforcement Officers to bring them up to a complement of 24-26 officers.

2. Letter from Barry Speed 4.11.19

I am concerned that there are no written reports for the following activities:

Barry, Thank you for your questions

2a) Tree planting

We understand that the target is to plant 30,000 trees in 5 years, so might expect to see a plan for achieving the first 6,000 trees this autumn. From casual conversation at the Green Fayre I learnt that green spaces have been identified in the town, but that these would only have capacity for 2,000 trees. Clearly this is worrying if true, and I think the public would expect a clear written statement in the form of a report, to give us the facts, and some plans as to how the public could help with the initiative.

To achieve this target we need to be working with key stakeholders and as many partners as possible, certain councillors and officers will also be involved. A working group has been established and has 8 members, this is a sub group of the Congleton Sustainability Group which links back to the Council via the Congleton Partnership. Any updates we receive as a council will be reported back to this committee, however I would suggest it is a bit early for the council to receive written reports or a plan at this stage.

2b) Streetscape

I did ask David previously if Streetscape gave reports to Committee, and he assured me that reports were dealt with in an as-required manner to Cheshire East, as the contract for the bulk of the work is with Cheshire East. However, I have discovered that Streetscape did in fact provide written reports to the Town Committee up until the end of 2015, but couldn't find them beyond that date. Given that Streetscape accounts for the bulk of Council employees and accounts for the largest single expenditure in the budget, can I ask if these reports can be restarted. Note, as far as I can tell, Ruth does an excellent job within the constraints and demands put upon her, simply that reports should be in place in any business as part of proper transparency and accountability.

The Chief Officer has already organised a presentation for Councillors to attend next week which will outline how the Service currently operates and proposals on how and where it reports to Council.

2c) In-Bloom

I was surprised to see there is no written report from In-Bloom, given that there has been no report since late Spring, and that the bulk of work is carried out over the summer. Again, it appears that In-Bloom activities consume a significant amount of Council expenditure and manpower, and should merit a reasonably regular written report.

The minutes of the In Bloom (Floral Arrangement) working group meetings are received by the Community Environment & Services Committee. The majority of preparation work and decisions are made by late Spring and are recorded in the minutes. There will be ad hoc operational meetings after this period but that is mostly to ensure the various voluntary activity is being supported by the working group members.

Congratulations to the In Bloom team for once again winning Gold Standard in the North West in Bloom Competition and being nominated to be the North Wests representatives for the 2020 Britain in Bloom Competition.

2d) There is a report regarding the Climate Change Emergency. However can I ask if the following can be clarified: Which organisation is tasked with coordinating the actions in response to the declared emergency – is this Congleton Green? And can we have clarification of who is the chairperson of Congleton Green.

It is envisaged that Congleton Green will coordinate the actions 4-7 identified within the report, and as also stated within the report Councillor Margaret Gartside is the Town Councillors representative and will be initial Chair of the group. One of the first items for the group is to agree its terms of reference, following that we should be able to give you a definitive position in terms responsibility for the overall coordination of actions.

3. Question from Maurice Walker

It has now been twelve months since vehicles were parked on the plot of land near to Aldi and opposite to the Boat. We now have a mobile home which has been parked there for a considerable time and the whole area is getting to look untidy and an eyesore for the town. This is also becoming a safety issue as vehicles rot away and children use the area as a play-ground. I would like to know what action the Town Council are prepared to take to remedy this blot on the landscape. I hope it is not to be ignored like the boat issue and just tolerated. It is time this problem with the land-owner was addressed before we have a much larger problem to deal with.

Thank you for your question. The land referred to is in private ownership and as such the Town Council has no jurisdiction that can force the owner to remove vehicles parked on his private land or force him to clean it up. The Town Council has referred the matter to Cheshire East Council who does has powers using a Untidy Land Notice (Section 215 of the Town and Country Plan Act) to force the landowner to clean up an area that is considered detrimental to the visual amenity of an area. This site is in a prominent area of town. Cheshire East has had some success using a 215 notice on this area in the past which has led to a couple of vehicles being removed. We have been informed that Cheshire East Council will visit the site and see if the poor condition reported warrants legal action.