

BRANDON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a PRECEPT Meeting of the Full Town Council

Monday 21 January 2002 at 7:00 pm at Community Centre, Bury Road, Brandon

Present: Cllr A P Saxby (Chairman), Cllr Mrs J A Ahern (Vice-Chairman), Cllr E V Ashley, Cllr P S Baldwin, Cllr Ms J S Bourton, Cllr S J Edwards (at 8:44 p.m.), Cllr Mrs S P Hufton, Cllr Mrs S M Jones-Weetman, Cllr Mrs S Jureko, Cllr R Silvester, Cllr A Thorne and Cllr N A Vant.

Also Present: Mrs L S Sherer (Town Clerk); member of the Public.

1. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 1

To allow the Meeting to commence at 7:00 p.m. Proposed : Cllr Vant; seconded : Cllr Thorne; **CARRIED** : unanimous. Resolution Record No: **BTCP19/21/Jan/02** : THAT STANDING ORDER NO. 1 BE SUSPENDED.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Mrs E Milner and B D Weetman.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Silvester declared an interest in Brandon Remembrance Playing Fields, sought permission to remain and speak to the Meeting, agreed NOT to vote on this item within the Precept. Permission granted.

4. MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING OF 24 SEPTEMBER 2001

The Meeting had taken place before the appointment of the current Town Clerk. Cllr Ms Bourton tabled several amendments to these Minutes and it was agreed that the entire set of Minutes should be retyped and resubmitted to the next Meeting of the Full Town Council scheduled for Monday 04 February 2002. Cllr Ms Bourton noted that two Declarations of Interest needed to be recorded - herself and Cllr Mrs Jureko, in respect of the Brandon Regeneration Project which should now, in fact, be termed "Brandon Community Partnership". She further noted that Keystone was formerly the Thetford Partnership. She commented that the section concerning Mr Cyril Brown was minimal. She requested that the wording for Item 4. on that Agenda be checked and noted that the Amendment had been: proposed: Cllr Ms Bourton; seconded: Cllr Baldwin; wording should have read : "That the Council resolves to consult the community over changing the Council from a Parish Council to a Town Council". Amendment had failed. Proposed: Cllr Ms Bourton; seconded: Cllr Vant; **CARRIED**: 7 for, 0 against, 4 abstentions. Resolution Record No. **BTCP20/21/Jan/02** THAT THE MINUTES OFFERED FOR MONDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2001 BE CORRECTED, RETYPED AND RESUBMITTED TO COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL AT THE NEXT FULL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING ON MONDAY 04 FEBRUARY 2002.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Item deferred to next Full Town Council Agenda - see item 4 above.

6. PRECEPT FOR BRANDON 2002/2003

The Chairman introduced the Expenditure and Totals Lists, of amounts expended by the Town Council from 01 April 2001 to 31 December 2001. Each item showed gross, net and vat elements and was allocated into a category, such as administration, cemetery, Old School House, etc. Cllr Ms Bourton queried Page 1, Line 19 Item : Postage £19.25 and the entry of £25.00 under Christmas Lights. The Chairman considered the estimated expenditure for the remainder of this Financial Year would be in the region of £20,000 and this was added to the Net Total Column of the Totals List.

The Chairman then introduced the Receipts List, which detailed every item of income received by the Town Council to date, from 01 April 2001 to 31 December 2001, including Bank Interest, Burial Fees, Old School House Rentals, etc.

The Chairman then introduced the Estimated Precept Figures for 2002 to 2003 and the entire document was studied, on a line-by-line item basis, to allow every Councillor present to contribute to the discussion. The document separated the sections of services provided, to identify items under the relevant categories of : Administration (including Staff Salaries), Cemetery, General Services, Old School House, Recreation, Streetlighting, Miscellaneous and contribution from Town Reserves (if any).

Cllr Baldwin queried the percentage increase calculation for Staff Salaries (confidential section of Estimated Precept) and was informed that the relevant figure was a 3.5% per staff

member per annum increase as per the recommended NALC Rates. Cllr Silvester felt that the amount of £10,000 allocated for H M The Queen's Golden Jubilee was excessive. Cllr Baldwin explained that this figure included other items, such as Medallions for schoolchildren, in addition to the proposed Street Party idea. Cllr Ms Bourton felt that the amount was too much to put aside in the Precept document. Cllr Mrs Ahern felt that the figure was not too high for a "once in twenty-five (25) years" event. Proposed: Cllr Saxby (from the Chair); seconded: Cllr Mrs Ahern; **CARRIED:** 8 for, 2 against, 1 abstention. Resolution Record No: **BTCP20/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM OF £10,000 BE ALLOCATED TO THE CELEBRATION OF HM THE QUEEN'S GOLDEN JUBILEE IN BRANDON.

Proposed: Cllr Ms Bourton; seconded: Cllr Thorne; **CARRIED:** unanimous. Resolution Record No: **BTCP21/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM OF £1,000 BE ALLOCATED AS A CONTINGENCY FOR FUTURE LEGAL FEES.

Cllr Vant enquired about joint-funding of the Thetford Road Play Area project. Cllr Silvester reminded Councillors that FHDC had agreed to "match-funding" of the Thetford Road Play Area and the Town Clerk was instructed to investigate the position and report back to Council.

Proposed: Cllr Ms Bourton; seconded: Cllr Vant; **CARRIED:** unanimous. Resolution Record No: **BTCP22/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM OF £1,000 FOR COMPUTER FEES BE DELETED AS THIS HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN PRECEPTED FOR BUT NOT YET USED.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs Ahern; seconded: Cllr Thorne; **CARRIED:** unanimous. Resolution Record No: **BTCP23/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM OF £150 FOR SAGE PAYROLL COMPUTER PACKAGE BE AGREED.

Proposed: Cllr Silvester; seconded: Cllr Ms Bourton; **NOT** carried: 5 for, 6 against, 0 abstention. "That the figure for Staff Training be reduced to £750".

Proposed: Cllr Mrs Ahern; seconded: Cllr Thorne; **CARRIED:** 6 for, 4 against, 1 abstention. Resolution Record No: **BTCP24/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM ALLOCATED IN THE PRECEPT FOR STAFF TRAINING BE £1,250.

Proposed: Cllr Saxby (from the Chair); seconded: Cllr Mrs Ahern; **CARRIED:** 9 for, 0 against, 2 abstentions. Resolution Record No: **BTCP25/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM ALLOCATED IN THE PRECEPT FOR COUNCILLOR TRAINING BE £250.

Proposed: Cllr Ms Bourton; seconded: Cllr Mrs Jureko; **CARRIED:** unanimous. Resolution Record No: **BTCP26/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM ALLOCATED IN THE PRECEPT FOR CHAIRMAN'S ALLOWANCE REMAIN AT £250.

Proposed: Cllr Ms Bourton; seconded: Cllr Mrs Jureko; **CARRIED:** 10 for, 1 against, 0 abstentions. Resolution Record No: **BTCP27/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM ALLOCATED IN THE PRECEPT FOR ADVERTISING BE REDUCED TO £25.

Proposed: Cllr Ms Bourton; seconded: Cllr Silvester; **CARRIED:** unanimous. Resolution Record No: **BTCP28/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM ALLOCATED IN THE PRECEPT FOR POSTAGE BE £500.

It was noted that the Public Works' Loan Board figure should be recorded as £4,172 - 30 for the year. Cllr Mrs Ahern felt that the room hire figure was very high. This could not be reduced, however, because of the requirement to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act legislation. The amount for the photocopier usage was reduced by £3.20 to £300 estimated for the year.

Proposed: Cllr Vant; seconded: Cllr Ms Bourton; **CARRIED:** unanimous. Resolution Record No: **BTCP29/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM ALLOCATED IN THE PRECEPT FOR TELEPHONE AND FAX BE REDUCED TO £400 ON THE BASIS OF MORE ECONOMICAL USAGE.

Proposed: Cllr Ms Bourton; seconded: Cllr Silvester; **CARRIED:** 6 for, 2 against, 3 abstentions. Resolution Record No: **BTCP30/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM ALLOCATED IN THE PRECEPT FOR THE CEMETERY BE REDUCED TO £8,000 ON THE BASIS OF MOWER PRECEPTED IN 2000/2001 AND EXPECTATION OF INCREASED INCOME.

The addition of £5,000 to “ear-marked” reserves for new Cemetery provision was approved. Cllr Silvester enquired if £2,000 for unsafe headstone maintenance was ongoing. The expectation was in the affirmative. Cllr Mrs Ahern requested that discussion of the Cemetery be placed on Agenda soon to discuss timings for funerals, staff overtime, burial fees etc.

Proposed: Cllr Silvester; seconded: Cllr Baldwin; **CARRIED:** unanimous. Resolution Record No: **BTCP31/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE NEW ITEM ALLOCATED IN THE PRECEPT FOR THE ONGOING MAINTENANCE OF UNSAFE HEADSTONES BE SET AT £2,000 INITIALLY.

Cllr Vant declared an interest on the item Re-calibration of Waterers and left the room.

The Chairman congratulated Cllr Mrs Ahern on her organization of the very successful Christmas Lights display in 2001. Cllr Silvester enquired if it would be possible to reduce the cost this year by purchasing a new set of lights. He wished to keep the allocation to £2,100 (net of VAT). The Chairman explained that the cost charged for the 2001 Lights included holiday cover by expert electricians, public liability insurance to £5m, erection of lights, provision of crane; all of which items would have to be paid by Brandon Town Council plus ongoing maintenance of the lights, in addition to purchase of the entire set.

Proposed: Cllr Thorne; seconded: Cllr Mrs Jureko; **CARRIED:** 9 for, 1 against, 1 abstention. Resolution Record No: **BTCP32/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE PROVISION FOR CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN 2002 BE INCREASED TO £2,500 NET OF VAT.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs Ahern; seconded: Cllr Mrs Jones-Weetman; **NOT** carried: 5 for, 5 against, 1 abstention. Chairman’s casting vote: 1 against. “That the S.137 provision for Grants be increased to £4,000.”

Cllr Silvester’s proposal of £3,000 was not seconded. Cllr Vant queried last year’s provision and the Town Clerk read out the list of grants made.

Proposed: Cllr Baldwin; seconded: Cllr Vant; **CARRIED:** 10 for, 0 against, 1 abstention. Resolution Record No: **BTCP33/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE PRECEPT PROVISION FOR S.137 GRANTS IN 2002/2003 BE £2,000.

Cllr Baldwin was concerned that the provision for Town Clock refurbishment may be insufficient. Proposed: Cllr Mrs Ahern; seconded: Cllr Thorne; **CARRIED:** 8 for, 1 against, 2 abstentions. Resolution Record No: **BTCP34/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE PROVISION FOR TOWN CLOCK REFURBISHMENT IN 2002/2003 BE APPROVED AT £2,070 NET OF VAT PLUS ANY EXTRA FROM JUBILEE.

Proposed: Cllr Ms Bourton; seconded: Cllr Silvester; **CARRIED:** 5 for, 3 against, 3 abstentions. Resolution Record No: **BTCP35/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUGGESTED CONTINGENCY FIGURE OF £10,000 BE DELETED FROM THE PRECEPT PROVISION FOR 2002/2003.

Proposed: Cllr Ms Bourton; seconded: Cllr Silvester; **CARRIED:** 9 for, 2 against, 0 abstention. Resolution Record No: **BTCP36/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE ALLOCATION FOR REFURBISHMENT OF THE TOWN SIGN BE SET AT £300 IN THE PRECEPT PROVISION FOR 2002/2003.

Proposed: Cllr Ms Bourton; seconded: Cllr Thorne; **CARRIED:** unanimous. Resolution Record No: **BTCP37/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE ALLOCATION FOR OLD SCHOOL HOUSE FEASIBILITY STUDY BE DELETED FROM THE 2002/2003 PRECEPT PROVISION AS RESERVES ALREADY HELD FOR THIS ITEM.

Proposed: Cllr Baldwin; seconded: Cllr Ashley; **CARRIED:** 5 for, 0 against, 6 abstentions. Resolution Record No: **BTCP38/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE ALLOCATION FOR OLD SCHOOL HOUSE GAS BILLS BE ESTIMATED AT £600 FOR THE 2002/2003 PRECEPT PROVISION BUT THAT THE TOWN CLERK CHECK ACTUAL OUT-TURN FOR 2001 AND REDUCE TO £500 IF POSSIBLE.

Cllr Silvester had declared an interest in Brandon Remembrance Playing Fields, been granted permission to remain in the meeting, did not vote. He queried the proposed reduction of the grant to £10,000. Cllr Mrs Jureko advised that the BRPF Steering Group needed the grant to operate. Cllr Vant explained that he had no problem with precepting for an amount of £15,000 but still wished to discuss payments. He was particularly concerned that the expected replacement of a seat had not materialised. Proposed: Cllr Baldwin; seconded: Cllr Vant: “That the grant allocation for Brandon Remembrance Playing Fields be continued at £15,000 in the 2002/2003 Precept.” Amendment Proposed: Cllr Saxby (from the Chair);

seconded: Cllr Thorne: "That the grant allocation for Brandon Remembrance Playing Fields be reduced to £12,500 in the 2002/2003 Precept." Cllr Baldwin rose to express his concerns at this proposal. He felt very strongly that the BRPF Steering Group had been under the impression that their grant would be £15,000 and felt honour-bound to commit the full amount. Amendment failed: 3 for, 7 against, 1 abstention (named Cllr Silvester). The Meeting returned to the original Proposal. **CARRIED:** 7 for, 3 against, 1 abstention (named Cllr Silvester). Resolution Record No. **BTCP39/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE ALLOCATION FOR BRANDON REMEMBRANCE PLAYING FIELDS BE £15,000 IN THE 2002/2003 PRECEPT.

Cllr Edwards joined the Meeting at 8:44 p.m.

The Brandon Orchard Project was discussed in considerable detail. Cllr Vant had suggested a figure of £10,000 from the expected surplus in relation to Thetford Road Play Area be allocated in addition to the £3,000 for The Orchard Project. Cllr Silvester felt £10,000 was a high figure combined with the £3,000. Cllr Vant reminded the Meeting that FHDC had agreed to joint-fund the Thetford Road Play Area which should release further funding. Cllr Silvester mentioned the possibility of a tennis club at Thetford Road Play Area. Concern was expressed that this might be a private club. Cllr Ashley felt that elderly of Brandon should not be forgotten. Cllr Vant felt that having been fortunate in receiving the gift of the land at The Orchard, there was an implied obligation to progress its development into an attractive facility for the people of Brandon. Cllr Mrs Ahern reminded Councillors that The Lode development pathways, seating, etc. had cost £7,000 some time ago.

Proposed: Cllr Vant; seconded: Cllr Thorne; **CARRIED:** 8 for, 1 against, 3 abstentions. Resolution Record No: **BTCP40/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM OF £3,000 REMAIN IN THE 2002/2003 PRECEPT ALLOCATION FOR THE ORCHARD PROJECT TOGETHER WITH ANY ADDITIONAL CREDIT BALANCE UP TO £10,000 AVAILABLE FROM THE THETFORD ROAD PLAY AREA DEVELOPMENT.

Proposed: Cllr Ms Bourton; seconded: Cllr Silvester; **CARRIED:** 11 for, 1 against, 0 abstention. Resolution Record No: **BTCP41/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM OF £250 BE DELETED FROM THE 2002/2003 PRECEPT ALLOCATION FOR THE LODE.

Cllr Baldwin enquired if the Eastern Contracting Maintenance Contract for Streetlighting was due to be renegotiated in the near future. Cllr Mr Ahern spoke regarding her study of Streetlights in both East and West Wards and requested that this item be placed on a future Agenda for extended discussion. Cllr Mrs Jones-Weetman enquired if FHDC had taken over any streetlights yet as per earlier discussions in this regard. Some of the repairs would be the subject of Insurance Claims and thus not part of the rolling replacement programme for which a reserve of £10,000 had been commenced in the 2000/2001 Precept. Cllr Mrs Jureko advised that streetlights need to be replaced at an average of 10% of stock per year.

Proposed: Cllr Mrs Ahern; seconded: Cllr Mrs Jureko; **CARRIED:** 6 for, 5 against, 1 abstention. Resolution Record No: **BTCP42/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE SUM OF £10,000 BE INCLUDED IN THE 2002/2003 PRECEPT ALLOCATION FOR THE ROLLING REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME IN RESPECT OF STREETLIGHTS.

General discussion ensued, regarding the total of Staff Salaries. It was agreed to pay a "one-off" bonus to both the Town Keeper and Assistant Town Keeper, in recognition for all their extra efforts, above and beyond the call of duty, during the recent difficult times of the Town Council's staffing situation. Cllr Mrs Ahern felt that this was a small price to pay for the service provided by the staff. Proposed : Cllr Vant; seconded : Cllr Thorne; **CARRIED:** unanimous. Resolution Record No. **BTCP43/21/Jan/02** : THAT A "ONE-OFF" BONUS BE PAID TO BOTH THE TOWN KEEPER AND ASSISTANT TOWN KEEPER IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR EXTRA EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF THE TOWN COUNCIL DURING 2001.

Cllrs Saxby, Ahern and Vant declared an interest in the PriceWaterhouseCooper item and left the room at 9:08 p.m. Proposed: Cllr Ashley; seconded: Cllr Thorne; **CARRIED:** unanimous. Resolution Record No. **BTCP44/21/Jan/02** : THAT CLLR BALDWIN BE ELECTED AS TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IN THE ABSENCE OF CLLR SAXBY. Cllr Baldwin signed the temporary Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Cllr Ms Bourton pointed out that the figure precepted in 2000/2001 had been £1,000 and not £10,000 for this item. She wished the Town Clerk to provide full accounts for 2000/2001 as soon as possible.

Proposed: Cllr Silvester; seconded : Cllr Thorne; **CARRIED:** 8 for, 0 against, 1 abstention; 3 out of room. Resolution Record No. **BTCP45/21/Jan/02** : THAT THE FIGURE

DESIGNATED FOR "PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPER" IN THE 2002/2003 PRECEPT BE SET AT £2,500 IN THE FIRST INSTANCE WITH ANY REMAINING DEBIT BALANCE TO BE PROVIDED FROM RESERVES.

Meeting closed at 21:45 hours. Next Meeting as per approved Schedule Monday 04 February 2002 (Full Town Council).