

## **NEEDHAM MARKET TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of the meeting of NEEDHAM MARKET TOWN COUNCIL held in Needham Market Community Centre on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 7:30pm.

**Present:** Cllr J Reardon (In the Chair), Councillors: BE Annis, G Cave, R Darnell, C Goodchild, T Lawrence, J Lea, M Norris, M O'Shea, M Ost, S Phillips, X Stansfield and A Reardon.

### **Apologies for Absence:**

Cllr I Mason – Holiday

Mid Suffolk District Councillor Ross Piper

**In Attendance:** Mid Suffolk District Councillor Terry Lawrence and the Town Clerk.

The meeting stood in silence for a minute, in memory of Jim Darrah, a key figure in the local community, who recently passed away.

### **C011/24 To confirm the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024.**

Cllr Lea proposed the Minutes of the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024 Town Council meeting be adopted. Cllr Ost seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

### **C012/24 To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interest for Matters on the Agenda.**

Cllr A Reardon – Accounts for Confirmation.

### **C013/24 To receive reports from the County Councillor, District Councillors and, to take questions from members of the public.**

Suffolk County Councillor Kay Oakes had provided a report which was circulated to Councillors and a copy of which will be appended to the Minute Book.

District Councillor Terry Lawrence had provided a District Councillor's Report, which was circulated to Councillors, and a copy of which will be appended to the Minute Book.

District Councillor Ross Piper had provided a District Councillor's Report, which was circulated to Councillors, and a copy of which will be appended to the Minute Book.

### **C014/24 To consider expressions of interest in co-option to the Town Council.**

The Clerk referred two expressions of interest to Councillors.

A ballot was held.

Following the result of the ballot being confirmed by the Clerk, Cllr J Reardon proposed Tina Cooke be co-opted to the vacant seat on the Town Council, subject to her making a formal Acceptance of Office. Cllr Ost seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

### **C015/24 To consider public consultation on the future of the former Middle School Playing Field.**

Cllr Phillips confirmed a land audit of the former Needham Market Middle School Playing Field is to be conducted prior to then carrying out public consultation. The objective of the land audit is to provide a baseline for consultation, particularly in relation to the flora and fauna assets inhabiting the field. Consideration also needs to be given to the terms of the lease with Suffolk County Council which allows/disallows activity on the site and constrains physical changes. The Climate Action Group has kindly offered to undertake the audit and report its outcome to the Community & Assets Committee.

Councillors made references to potential availability of support from Suffolk County Council towards additional tree planting. Any trees planted should be as mature as possible in part to deter their theft.

**C016/24 To consider the High Street Parking Restrictions.**

Cllr Lawrence reported he had received approaches from residents of neighbouring parishes who commented on the parking restrictions in Needham Market High Street with the general principle an hour is insufficient. He has subsequently spoken to Suffolk County Council and received advice the hour restriction was imposed to cause churn. Having sought feedback from neighbouring Parish Councillors, the principle the time period for High Street parking is very often impractical, suggests consultation on the issue would be appropriate.

Councillors referred to having received the same comments relayed to Cllr Lawrence and a look at what options may be available could be apposite. It was acknowledged the legal costs attached to changing parking restrictions are considerable although contributions may be available via Locality Funds. Cllr Darnell made the point it could require a lot of funding to satisfy the wishes of a minority.

Cllr Lawrence proposed he continue to investigate the issues attached to seeking an increase in the High Street waiting time from 1 hour to 2 hours. Cllr Phillips seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

**C017/24 To consider the Suffolk County Council proposal for devolution.**

Cllr Lea stated devolution for Suffolk proposals have been raised several times before creating deep divisions in the existing Suffolk Local Government framework.

The Clerk explained the approach, on this occasion, is different from that taken before. Suffolk County Council is seeking to enter a 'deal' with Central Government which would bring discreet funding to Suffolk and an 'elected leader'.

Cllr Annis said the financial reward in the 'deal' is abysmal as, although the headline figure appears attractive, it should be taken in the context it will be spread over a 30-year period. The aim of the 'deal' is to give Suffolk County Council greater powers and it would create a further layer of costly administration.

Councillors concluded the forthcoming public consultation on the 'deal' should be communicated via the Town Council Newsletter. They could find nothing categorically positive in what is proposed.

Cllr Phillips proposed the Clerk submit a corporate Town Council response to the County Council's consultation reflecting the negative supposition reached by Councillors. Cllr Lea seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

**C018/24 To receive a report of the activities of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor on behalf of the Town.**

The Mayor reported:

- 6<sup>th</sup> February - Chaired the Flooding Community Engagement meeting
- 9<sup>th</sup> March – Mayor's Quiz Night (£712 raised for the Mayor's nominated charities (The Ark and St John's Pantry)

The Deputy Mayor had nothing to report.

**C019/24 To receive a report from Council's Civic Events Working Group.**

Cllr Lea referred to the recent passing of Jim Darrah, who played a key role in the Annual Remembrance Service. His absence will need to be considered, particularly relating to the standard bearer role.

**C020/24 Clerk's Report and Correspondence to be noted.**

The Clerk reported receipt of a request from Mid Anglia Rail Passengers Association (MARPA) encouraging the Town Council to join under its corporate membership subscription of £25 per annum. Cllr Lawrence provided information of what MARPA is seeking to achieve in relation to the railway which serves Needham Market.

Cllr Lea proposed Council join MARPA as a corporate member with annual renewal until further notice. Cllr Goodchild seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

Cllr Norris said he will try and engage in MARPA meetings.

**C021/24 Committees**

**Governance & Finance Committee.**

**C021/24/1a Accounts for Payment and Confirmation.**

Cllr Annis presented the Accounts for Payment and Confirmation, which were tabled and a copy of which will be appended to the Minute Book.

Cllr Annis proposed adoption of the Accounts for Payment and Confirmation. Cllr Phillips seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

**C021/24/1b To adopt Minutes from the Governance & Finance Committee 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024.**

Cllr Annis proposed adoption of the Minutes from the Governance & Finance Committee held 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Cllr Ost seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

**C021/24/1c To receive confirmation of compliance with the Pensions Regulator requirements.**

The Clerk explained confirmation of compliance is a duty which is included in scope of Council's internal audit process.

Cllr Annis proposed Council confirm it has complied with the Pensions Regulator requirements. Cllr Lea seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

**C021/24/1d To receive a report from the Committee Chairperson.**

Cllr Annis confirmed the next meeting of the Governance & Finance Committee will be held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

**C021/24/2 Community & Assets Committee.**

**C021/24/2a To receive a report from the Committee Chairperson.**

Cllr Phillips reported the new younger children's play area on Crowley Park is open and being well used.

Cllr Phillips referred to a quotation for £810 (plus estimated hire of a small digger at £320) received for the removal of an old and unused item of play equipment on Crowley Park. Cllr Phillips proposed Council accept the quotation. Cllr Norris seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

Cllr Phillips confirmed the older children's play area on Crowley Park will now receive attention.

Cllr A Reardon reported, in relation to the forthcoming local meeting to establish a Flood Group in the town, a template has been received from Suffolk County Council that can be used to create a Community Emergency Plan. Whilst the template could be deployed for a Flood Response Plan, the question is, should the template be used to its full extent? Councillors responded, from previous experience being involved in full scale emergency plans, the template should be used initially just for the purpose of creating a Flood Response Plan.

**C021/24/2b To adopt Minutes from the Community & Assets Committee 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024**

Cllr Phillips proposed the adoption of the Minutes from the Community & Assets Committee held 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024. Cllr Lea seconded the proposal. Council agreed the proposal.

**C021/24/3 Planning Committee.**

**C021/24/3a To receive a report from the Committee Chairperson.**

Cllr O’Shea reported the Committee’s 5<sup>th</sup> February meeting had been cancelled due to lack of business and there was a minor error on the draft Minutes from the Committee’s 4<sup>th</sup> March meeting that needed correcting.

Cllr O’Shea reported four planning applications have been received following the 4<sup>th</sup> March Committee meeting, one of which proposes the opening of a new vehicular access onto farmland off Grinstead Hill (PA DC/24/00683). The deadline for responses to consultation on the application is 27<sup>th</sup> March, which is prior to the next Planning Committee meeting (Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April). The Clerk said he will ask the Mid Suffolk District Council Planning Service to extend the response deadline to Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April.

**C021/24/3b To receive a report on the review of the Needham Market Neighbourhood Plan.**

Cllr Ost had nothing to report.

**The Meeting closed at 9pm.**

Chairperson ..... Date .....

