

Extra-Ordinary Council Meeting

Tuesday 8th December 2020 at 7.30pm

Online at zoom.us (or via your device app)



Minutes

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a true and correct record by the next meeting of the Council.

PRESENT

Councillors:

P Davies	M Mallows
A Dearlove	M McNeill
P Giesberg	J Moody
E Hards (Mayor)	A Sandiford
V Haval	P Siggers
A Hudson	A Thompson
M Khan (Deputy Mayor)	C Wilson
A Macdonald	M. Walsh (initial problems connecting)
D Macdonald	

Officers:

Janet Wheeler - Town Clerk

Guy Langton – Planning and Environment Officer

Also present approximately forty-three members of the public.

The Mayor opened the meeting by suspending Standing Order 71 – standing to address the Chair and Standing Order 73 – speaking once on a motion.

65. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs J Durman and D Rouane.

66. To receive declarations of interests

The Mayor spoke to advise that she had a Willowbrook gym membership paid by annual subscription, but she had waived her right to claim the outstanding balance and thus no longer had a personal financial interest. Members who paid membership by direct debit did not have to declare an interest as they were able to cancel their direct debit at any time. There were no other declarations.

Standing Orders were then suspended and the meeting adjourned to allow members of the public the opportunity to speak to the Council.

There were five speakers who addressed the Council regarding their views on the future use of the Willowbrook building and the importance of publicly available leisure facilities within the Didcot area.

The Mayor thanked all the residents who were attending this meeting and said that a statement from the Leader would be published on the Town Council website in the morning. Due to the sensitive nature of the documentation the rest of the meeting would have to be in a confidential session.

67. Exclusion of the press and public

It was **RESOLVED** to exclude the press and public from the meeting pursuant to Section 1 of the Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act 1960 on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

68. To receive a report to the background of two confidential meetings

Cllr John Moody spoke to a report from the Town Clerk on two fact-finding meetings held with Soll Park Club regarding the future of their business. Cllr Moody confirmed that the Town Council were owed a substantial amount of money in lost rent and it had become increasingly obvious to the Town Council that the business was in difficulties. The second lockdown was stated as having “a material impact on the company” and they had resolved that they could only offer the Town Council a Company Voluntary Arrangement (CVA) as a means of allowing them to continue operating from Milton Park with the intention of making a return in January 2022 to their creditors. This was deemed a favourable option to liquidation even though the return was likely to be a tiny percentage of total monies owed.

The report was noted and discussed by the Councillors.

69. To note the initial legal advice received from the Council’s solicitors

The initial legal advice received before the second meeting with Soll Park Club detailed the various options open to the Town Council. The CVA was detailed as the most likely scenario to allow the company to continue trading at Milton Park in a bid to give some return to their creditors.

70. To receive the papers from the re-structuring advisory company instructed by Soll Park Club

Cllr John Moody spoke to the papers and to explain the sums owed to the Town Council. It was reiterated that the Town Council would only receive a small percentage in every pound owed and this return (if any) would be in January 2022. It was also noted that there were many much larger creditors who all had a vote on the CVA. It was clarified that the £25,000 bond currently held by the Town Council would be deducted from any monies due in January 2022.

71. To review further advice from the Council's solicitors

Further clarification of the situation and the options open to the Town Council was discussed by the Town Councillors. There was also the option of an amendment to the CVA to allow for a sum to reduce the risk of costs to the Town Council in clearing the site.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to support the CVA as the best means of mitigating some of the monies owed to the Town Council. The vote was carried.

It was further proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to amend the CVA in section 12.3 (f) to commit the company to remove all items and rubbish not forming part of the fixtures, fittings and chattels prior to the site being relinquished back to the owner. The vote was carried.

The next steps in regards to the future of this property was discussed and the Town Clerk would bring a proposed timeline to the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 21st December 2020 by which time the building will have been returned to the Town Council.

The Town Council would engage with the community by means of a consultation and invite potential providers to detail their interest. Once this information has been collated the F&GP Committee along with the new Property and Facilities Committee will consider the best options to recommend to the Council.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm.

Signed:

(Mayor)

Date: