



SHAFTESBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of Full Council held on **Tuesday 27th August 2013** at 7:00pm in the Guildhall.

Present: Cllr Pritchard (Chairman) Cllr Clinch
 Cllr Dibben Cllr Harvey
 Cllr Hicks Cllr Lewer
 Cllr Pestell Cllr Thompson

In attendance: Cllr Proctor
 Ms Nicola Duke (CEO & Town Clerk)
 Mrs Barbara Carter (Acting Deputy Town Clerk)
 82 members of the public

Public Consultation

Mr Nigel Cook – spoke requesting that members stuck to the agenda and that he would raise any other issues at the end of the meeting.

Mr Anthony Austin – requested that the Parish met formally in September to consider that 3 Councillors had brought the Council into disrepute. He said that a full agenda would be provided to STC by 6th September 2013 and 65 Signatures would be available on request.

Mr Richard Thomas – read out letter from Mrs Pat Roberts asking all councillors not to vote on the proposed vote of no confidence, she asked councillors to focus on business and revise plans for war memorial and allow the Mayor to lead Town.

Mr Pierre Jordaan – expressed the view that the public could not be expected to debate when they didn't know what was to be discussed. The Mayor responded that he had the same information that they had. Cllr Pestell added that there would be more public consultation at the end of the meeting so members of the public would get an opportunity to talk further then.

Mr Anthony Austin – sought permission to address Cllr Hicks regarding the nature of what had been said. It was agreed.

Cllr Hicks – responded that Shaftesbury Town Council was dysfunctional, that it had just lost a good councillor, that email was not been the best way of dealing with problems and that Council had failed to address problems it had. He added that Cllr Pritchard had done some things well and some better but that he was unhappy with what was done or not done and decisions made based on bad advice. He made reference to unresolved issues which after 1 year in his understanding had not been sorted, the open letter from the Annual Assembly which sounded as if it was from Shaftesbury Town Council and should have been from the people, working relationships with NDDC and made reference to a 'Renegade Councillor'. Mr Austin asked who

he referred to and he responded 'Cllr Proctor'. Cllr Hicks continued that he also identified the bus provision over the summer as a problem which the chairman had failed to address of which all councillors with the exception of Cllr Tippins were partly responsible.

Mr Pierre Jordaan – asked if the Council minutes were correct as if there were problems the minutes should reflect this. Cllr Pritchard responded that minutes were not verbatim record.

Cllr Pestell asked if the 3 councillors could reply,

Cllr Dibben – responded that there had been an informal meeting and misleading emails and it should not have been a vote of no confidence. He mentioned regarding the swimming pool that 50% of people wanted to keep it open, that Cllr Proctor wanted to happen but the Town Council did not vote for it to happen. He referred to the Business Plan and mechanism for pool to survive, noting that the Council had provided £25,000 year on year and the Fitness Suite could make that happen. He reported that in the Blackmore Vale Magazine, Cllr Proctor had stated that NDDC would put roof on whereas he stated that they wouldn't. There had been no follow up meeting to discuss this further. He expressed the opinion that Mr Toms had emailed resignation and then retracted it, then more recently resigned as Cllr Proctor had published something in the Blackmore Vale Magazine. Mr Austin mentioned that there had been a meeting in April where £45,000 was agreed towards the pool, Cllr Dibben responded that there was conflicting understanding as to whether or not NDDC would put the roof back on and the expectations regarding the Business plan and community agreement.

Ms Sarah McQueen – asked why Cllr Dibben signed the letter. Cllr Dibben responded that he felt the need to discuss why disruption was happening and things were getting undermined including referring back to NDDC. Ms McQueen responded that he couldn't hold Cllr Pritchard to account for that.

Mrs M McCormack – asked that Cllr Dibben responded to the question about the letter, that she didn't want to hear about Pool. Cllr Dibben responded that concerns were not dealt with following an informal meeting, that a resolution had been put but not decided upon.

Cllr Thompson – confirmed that the letter had been typed by himself, clarifying that councillors were not happy with Cllr Pritchard's attitude. He further clarified that the meeting Cllr Dibben referred to was not a proposal, it was an informal council meeting to discuss deteriorating relationships. He had asked three times for a meeting and each time the date was stopped so he felt this was the only way to get things discussed. He stressed that even verbatim minutes could not show expressions and gestures and urged people to attend council meetings.

Mr M Madgwick – responded that he did come to meetings and had noticed that the behaviour was appalling with bullying and cajoling. He had been asking questions but had been ignored.

Ms R Caldwell – recalled the Annual Assembly in May, that the Mayor's report realised things were not perfect and shared that feeling. She acknowledged that having talked with other towns, things move slowly and were complex in Local Government. She urged people to look at problems calmly and to address in realistic manner. She expressed the opinion that Cllr Pritchard was a young mayor, was aware of the difficulties and should be given a chance to try to rectify what is happening all over the Country. Cllr Pritchard responded that the Town Council may not have the right skills in the right places and this needed to be sorted internally before it could move on.

Mr A Austin – asked Cllr Thompson if his licence to practice had been put in abeyance by ACCA. Cllr Thompson responded that was untrue. Mr Austin asked if he had been convicted of a crime, Cllr Thompson responded advising legal action if this was raised again. Mr Austin read from a relating news article.

Mr P Jordaán – asked that the meeting was stopped to allow public consultation, Cllr Pritchard responded that the Public Consultation period came before the formal part of the meeting.

Mr R Thomas – said that only 2 councillors were elected, 4 were co-opted and 5 were returned unopposed. He mentioned bullying from Cllr Thompson, that most councillors did not represent the public, and that his view was that the council was the most dysfunctional he had known. He made reference to Shaftesbury Town Council renegeing on the swimming pool, that there was a false premise forward by the two councillors who signed proposal. He mentioned the War Memorial on Park Walk and The Maltings noting that permission had not been given from Civic Society or the Royal British Legion.

Cllr Pestell – stated that he would not comment on procedural issues and clarified that co-option was the only option when 10 electorate had not proposed a nominee for a vacancy. Mrs McCormack said she didn't know there was a vacancy to which Cllr Pritchard responded that NDDC administer the process and issue notices.

Cllr Cook – commented that he would like to see more people at council meetings, they would then know what was going on, see councillors speak and speak with them and engage with contentious decisions. He noted that there were more comments about the council on Facebook than people in public gallery.

Mr Madgwick – observed that if such conduct were from members of his staff, they would have been disciplined. He asked why members couldn't devote ½ hour to behaving differently.

Mrs M McCormack – commented that in her opinion Shaftesbury Town Council had taken money that should have been spent elsewhere. Cllr Hicks responded that all developer contribution money collected was with NDDC , that £80,000 had gone to the Pool from a previous development but that all s106 monies from the Persimmon development was with NDDC. Mrs McCormack replied that that was not true and she would sue.

Mr A Austin – asked in relation to the War Memorial what advice was received from British Legion and Civic Society. Cllr Dibben responded that he had met with both, that the original proposal was 2 pieces of green either side of the current memorial but that the British Legion had not liked that idea and had wanted something else, as they were unable to fund, he developed it with the community. He continued that the Eastern Development was being done at the same time, at the end of the wild life corridor in a quiet place. He confirmed that he had met with British Legion and Rifles and the proposal had gone through Council, the Local Planning Authority had said that no planning permission was required – only Abbey Wall and 1 & 2 Park Lane.

Mr M Paterson – spoke saying that he was warned that the meeting would go off track, Cllr Thompson had explained that the meeting was a device to discuss issues. He noted that all the constituents had expressed the opinion of being very unhappy in a vote of no confidence. He expressed the view that what was wanted was a functional effective transparent Council.

Mr B Freeman – spoke saying that he had put in a Freedom of Information request asking who had resigned and who has joined since May 2008. He noted that 6 signatures had been on the letter including Cllr Harvey. Cllr Harvey responded that she had found it difficult because of infighting and not working as a team. She considered that the vote of no confidence would not be the best way of dealing with it, so withdrew her name. She apologised to the Mayor and the Town for the misunderstanding.

Cllr Pritchard called an end to the Public Session.

2013/42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Cllr Proctor had sent his apologies for absence. An email had been sent to the Clerk, which was read out, expressing his support for the Mayor. It was clarified that this would be noted for minutes but would not count as a vote as he was not present.

2013/43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS TO PARTICIPATE

Members were provided with the opportunity under the Localism Act 2011 to declare any pecuniary interests or dispensations to participate in the meeting. There were none.

2013/44 MOTION FROM CLLRS DIBBEN, HICKS AND THOMPSON

The motion was to be put forward by Cllrs Dibben, Hicks and Thompson who called the meeting. There was no response therefore the motion fell.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed.

Public Consultation

A member of the public – asked whether there was any other way of raising, rather than put through at the last minute. Cllr Harvey responded that a workshop should have been held to discuss. Cllr Pritchard echoed Cllr Harvey.

Mr M Madgwick – stated that there was public support for the Mayor, and that in his opinion the 3 Councillors were not fit for purpose anymore and were not democratically representative. He requested a vote in the room to show those who believe the 3 Councillors should resign.

A vote was taken and a show of hands: 48 for
11 Abstentions

Mr Madgwick said it was very ad-hoc but a reasonable indication.

Mr R Thomas – Expressed upset by lack of transparency. He added that Cllr Dibben had given an indication of what was going on with CIC taking over Barton Hill Car Park. Cllr Dibben responded that it was a Council decision to set up the CIC and that all the directors would resign when the company was set up. Mr Madgwick stated that he was a director until 15th August. 4 of the 7 directors were councillors and in his opinion this presented a conflict of interest and were not able to act. He added that no disclosure of interest document had been produced, board meeting minutes had never been received to approve and £1.42m s106 monies involved. He disagreed with Cllr Dibben and believed the long email trail should be available for public scrutiny.

Mr A Austin – asked how those who were not on the Council asked to be directors. Cllr Pestell responded that once the CIC was formed and run properly the directors would resign, that there had been meetings of people but no formal board meetings. Mr Austin pressed Cllr Dibben for a response. Cllr Dibben responded that the Company was set up by Shaftesbury Town Council and he had had talks with local groups and the directors reflected those groups, he advised that Mr Madgwick did not attend despite being sent emails.

Ms P Cruikshank – Confirmed there had been no formal board meetings, and other organisations had come to give information. She reported that there was government funding for a Public Consultation.

Mr P Jordaan – Said that there was a clear lack of communication between the council and the public and that the council needed to review how it communicated with the public. He observed that the website was not a good way as it was rather obtuse, he suggested a newsletter every 3 months with information on memorial, the Pool etc. Cllr Pritchard responded that the council produced a newsletter called the Town Crier, Cllr Cook stated that the only way to find out was to come to meetings.

Mrs Austin – commented that she had lived in Shaftesbury for 5 years and had never seen a Town Crier. She added that elected Councillors were elected to run town. Cllr Proctor suggested that the council could use what was already there citing Shaftesbury Matters as an example.

Cllr Dibben – stated that the Underhill Ward had meetings 3 times a year and that 40-50 people attended to take forward issues.

A member of the public – asked about the dedication ceremony for the memorials on 14th September. Cllr Pritchard responded that the council was waiting for English Heritage to visit and would update at next week's Full Council Meeting.

A member of the public – said that they were a new resident on The Maltings and didn't want to see more housing and that was the only thing they were interested in. They said that the council must make it clear what is going to be discussed for people to be likely to attend. Cllr Pritchard responded that Planning Applications from North Dorset go on the Planning & Highways Agenda and added that the town council was only a consultee in the process. LD added that the Ward Members for that area were Tim Cook, Adrian Thompson and Joe Pestell.

A member of the public - asked a question to Cllr Dibben regarding the Football Club asking how long before it was open. Cllr Dibben replied that the council had other parties showing an interest.

Cllr Steve – put forward a motion that as the social club had been empty since June and the council were responsible for the insurance, he would like to vote to drop the current negotiations. Cllr Pritchard advised that as the council was not in session, this motion could not be considered at this point.

Mr R Thomas – reported that there was an Overview and Scrutiny meeting at NDDC, and the top agenda item was the Eastern Development, he urged members to attend.

Cllr Pritchard closed the public consultation at 9pm.