

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 11th June 2018 at 7:00pm in the Guildhall, High Street, Shaftesbury

Present:

Town Councillor Taylor (Vice-Chairman)
Town Councillor Lewer
Town Councillor Cook

Town Councillor Jackson
Claire Commons, Town Clerk

Stakeholders and Representatives:

District and County Councillor Beer
Martin Hamilton, North Dorset District Council
Mike Madgwick, Shaftesbury Civic Society
Jackie Upton-King, Shaftesbury Civic Society

Bernard Ede, Shaftesbury Open Spaces Group
David Perry, S'bury Chamber of Commerce
Brie Logan, Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan
Advisory Committee

In attendance:

2 members of the press
60 members of the public

MINUTES

1. Welcome

The Deputy Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that he would be chairing the meeting as the Mayor was on holiday. He drew attention to the purpose of the meeting to inform the electorate and local organisations about the current situation with the Cattle Market site and to seek views and opinions on actions that could be taken to achieve the best for Shaftesbury.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been reported from District Councillors Francis, Jefferson and Pritchard.

3. Shaftesbury Cattle Market

North Dorset District Council's Strategic Director spoke about the ownership of the cattle market and the current operator, that it had been agreed between them that there would be an opportunity to redevelop the site, the site was marketed, bids received and one agreed to progress. He stressed that he could not yet divulge who that is as they were in the process of details of the contract. He also stressed that there was clear distinction between the role of assets and the role of planning so there was no conflict of interest.

It was reported that Shaftesbury Civic Society had submitted an application for the site to be nominated as an asset of community value. It was clarified that legislation allows such applications but it did not mean that it automatically became the community's - it just gives the right to bid. It was confirmed that there will not be a sale while the group puts forward a bid. The deadline for a decision on the nomination is 8th July 2018.

Councillor Taylor added, that if the sale goes ahead as described, there is still the planning process to help get the best for Shaftesbury.

4. Representation from Local Organisations

Mike Madgwick spoke as Chairman and Jackie Upton-King as Hon. Secretary to the Shaftesbury Civic Society. They gave a history to Civic Voice (to which they are affiliated) and outlined the local objective to share pride of place, promote good planning and design and natural environment. They commented that the site represents a key site for meeting local needs, expressed concern that the sale proceeds would not come to Shaftesbury and queried why a new site was looking to be developed for retail when there was an empty retail site on Bell Street and opportunity on the Employment Land on the A30.

The Civic Society welcomed the event in the town hall, observing that many had found it useful and welcomed the opportunity to have their say, he added that a recent YouGov survey showed 70% of people in the UK didn't feel their voices were heard and in North Dorset that increased to 74%. It was hoped that the evening would be opportunity for others to have their views. The Civic Society concluded that they did not want to take a leadership position but to engage all and value their partners such as the town council and others, that it wouldn't be an easy job and it must involve the talents of all to build the community.

Bernard Ede spoke from the Open Spaces Group. A voluntary group of individuals interested in the town and open spaces in particular. He spoke in support of the Civic Society expressing the opinion that the site is a large strategically located site and should not be considered just as a financial asset but should be considered in relation to other elements in the town rather than in commercial isolation. He spoke of its relationship with Tesco, parking and coaches, how it may relate to the community hall site the football club the footpath and cycleway network which is DCC's strategic link to pull together the eastern flanks of the town. He also spoke about concern for the environmental impact of developing a site off Christy's lane, the highway and sight line requirements. The Open Spaces Group were concerned that the beach avenue would be in jeopardy and concluded with an observation, notwithstanding the Strategic Director's credentials, that NDDC owned the land, maintained the Asset of Community Value list and was also the planning authority.

David Perry spoke on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce representing around 100 businesses in the town. He made reference to the Joint Retail and Commercial Leisure Study which showed that people from Shaftesbury shopped in other towns and that demonstrated supports for another supermarket. He mentioned carparking as a big issue. In reference to the Bell Street site he observed that all the other major retailers were not expanding, the site needed redeveloping and therefore wishing whoever was intending going on the Cattle Market site to go in Bell Street wouldn't happen. The only businesses expanding are Lidl and Aldi and they are not going there. Only other site for a supermarket would be out of town and from a chamber point of view that would be an unmitigated disaster.

Brie Logan spoke on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee. She acknowledged that the group had been working hard on the Neighbourhood Plan, having recently undertaken a mini survey across the community and compiled that information as

evidence to start to make progress building evidence base and building on the comments from the Civic Society, Chamber and Open Spaces Group. From that will be emerging policies which we will be prepared before going to public.

Derek Beer spoke as District and County Councillor. He urged people to stay on the ball and referred to experiences when he was first on the Town and District Councils and how things were able to change.

5. Previously received questions

There had been no questions received in advance of the meeting.

6. Questions from the floor

Questions and statements were invited from the floor, answers, responses and supporting statements were provided by North Dorset District Council, Shaftesbury Town Council, Shaftesbury Chamber of Commerce and Shaftesbury Civic Society. The questions related to

- Using the Bell Street supermarket as a location for the new supermarket (not North Dorset District Council's asset to manage and Chamber expertise indicated that it was not the correct size for a viable supermarket)
- Confirming that successful registration (if achieved) as an asset of community value would merely allow the right to bid, not necessarily secure the asset for the town.
- How was the site marketed (an appointed agent which sent brochures to likely developers)
- If/When the asset is sold, what money would come back to Shaftesbury (none from the capital receipt but there would be planning gain and/or conditions through the planning process)
- Concern about how the lease was managed.

It was asked whether the room could call for a parish poll (confirmed), the cost for a formal parish poll exceeding £8,000 was advised and that a question would need to be identified before the close of the meeting. The room was reminded that there was an online consultation still in progress which would continue until midday on Monday 18th June. Suggestions for a question were put but there was no seconder received.

It was asked that a second town meeting was held with the council's solicitor/barrister. The Clerk advised that this could not be promised, Councillor Taylor promised a second town meeting when there was further update to provide.

Councillor Taylor assured those present that councillors would discuss directly following the meeting what the next steps were regarding legal advice and questions to be put.

The meeting was closed at 9:13pm