

Swaffham Town Council

Minutes of the **Full Town Council** meeting held on **Wednesday 6th November 2019** at **6.30pm** in the Council Chamber, Town Hall Swaffham.

Present: Mayor Cllr J Skinner (in the Chair)

Councillors: Mrs J Anscombe, Mrs L Beech, Mr S Bell, Mrs W Bensley, Mr P Darby, Mr B Holmes, Mr C Houghton, Mrs S Matthews, Mr K Sandle, Mr L Scott

Town Clerk: Mr R Bishop

Minute Taker: Mrs C Smith

Breckland & Norfolk Cllr: Mr E Colman

Breckland Council Officers: Mr R Walker, Mrs Z Footer, Mr R Burton

1. **Apologies and reason for absence**

Cllr G Edwards, Cllr I Pilcher, District Cllr D Wickerson, District Cllr I Sherwood

2. **Declarations of Interest** –There were no declarations of Interest noted.

3. **ADMISSION TO MEETINGS ACT (PUBLIC BODIES) 1960**

CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS following the exclusion of the public and press

4. **Progress report on the Green Britain Centre and Days Field**

The Town Clerk thanked Breckland officers for attending the meeting and reported that there had been a number of discussions so far regarding the project and the next steps were to start the process of developing the project and carrying out due diligence. It was confirmed that Breckland had made Swaffham Town Council the preferred bidder following the submission of an idea to develop the Green Britain Centre as a community hub for a variety of services.

Cllrs now welcomed the opportunity to ask some questions regarding this project and raise concerns over S106 funds that had not been passed on to the Town Council.

Cllr Colman reported that one of the stumbling blocks was perceived to be the non-publication of the sport feasibility report. He stated that this was commissioned before the GBC proposal and that, as it was now out of date, more work would be needed and until complete it had been decided not to share the report.

This point of view was challenged as it was considered important to the project that the Town Council should know what options were being considered for leisure facilities. It was accepted that some of the information could be confidential and suggested that the Town Council could deal with the information in the closed part of a meeting.

Breckland Officers responded that not all the information in the report was relevant to Swaffham, and that some of the report had been super ceded by the proposal for the GBC. Some detail was shared regarding viable services that Breckland were looking to provide in Swaffham, including a 28-30 station Gym, dance studio, spin room and some community use.

A question and answer session followed with a number of points addressed including:

- A brief description of how Breckland owned the land, put the infrastructure in place. The land was then leased back to previous owner of the centre who had the centre built with

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European funding. The Turbine is owned by the tenant, a sub-lease is in place on a fixed term. (10 years remain on this lease.)

- Covenants and restrictions – there were no known covenants or restrictions reported, however these would need to be looked at by solicitors in searches forming part of the due diligence procedures. Any conditions around the original funding to build the centre were believed to have lapsed.
- Environmental design covenant – no restrictive building covenants were in place. It was considered that a high standard of environmental considerations was aspirational and not a requirement of any future development.
- Heating system capable of heating the estate – it was confirmed that this system was in situ but had not been used.
- Rates – an enquiry to the Anglia Revenues Partnership would need to be made to establish the rates for the building.
- It was questioned why the Town Council could not see the report at an earlier stage when the options were live. Breckland officers responded that at that time viable options were not deliverable and so could not be shared. To do so would raise expectations that could not be met. The project of the GBC was then suggested and it was agreed that Breckland would work with the Town Council.
- In response to why Breckland needed the Town Council for the project, it was confirmed that the Town Council had approached Breckland with the proposal in the first instance.
- It was confirmed that sport and leisure could still be provided at the school. Whilst there would be improvements in the facility it would continue to be a part time service to fit with the school day.
- The building condition was discussed although it was acknowledged that this issue needed to be addressed in due diligence. The building condition was thought to be reasonable and Breckland agreed to share any recent building reports.
- Development of project – Cllr Colman expressed the belief that Breckland were looking to work with the Town Council and that other services may be willing to come on board and be placed at a community hub. This opportunity may attract funding from other streams such as the LEP as well as support from principle authorities.
- Sports facilities – the nature of facilities was discussed, including the changes and preference for individual activities rather than sports hall games.
- Planning restrictions – it was confirmed that planning colleagues were aware of project discussions and had not raised any red flags at the moment.

S106

The delay in payment of s106 funding was identified as a major issue between the Town Council and Breckland. Although the money had been transferred from Milngate to Breckland, Breckland would not release the money until Tesco and Milngate signed off that the money had been spent in accordance with the S106 agreement. The Town Clerk had been diligently pursuing this money for 5 years. A meeting was offered by R Walker to the Town Clerk to try and resolve the release of money up to the undisputed level.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk would meet with R Walker on 13th November to identify which monies could be released as not all the projects and wording were in dispute. Cllr Colman agreed to ask E Truss MP to support the Town Council's case with Tesco and Milngate.

7.35pm Breckland officers left the meeting

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5. **Issues relating to due diligence and plan of action**

Cllrs discussed the project further and agreed that at this stage more information should be gathered. It was also noted that other agencies had expressed an interest in being based at the GBC and would like to meet and discuss the plans. It was proposed by Cllr Houghton, seconded by Cllr Darby to go ahead and meet with prospective partners and get quotes for professional services and evaluations.

It was agreed with 9 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention to meet with prospective partners and get quotes for professional services and evaluations, and start of the due diligence process.

Cllrs discussed a task and finish group but declined to make nominations as it was agreed that all wanted to be involved and were prepared to make themselves available, at short notice if necessary.

Cllr Colman offered to hold regular informal meetings to support the process and keep communication between all authorities open.

Possible dates for public consultation and extraordinary meeting, in January and February respectively and at the end of due diligence were discussed. It was agreed that these were target dates and could be put back if necessary.

6. **Issues relating to the two acres of land purchased by the Town Council for the Swimming Pool**

Cllrs discussed the land currently being used by a local farmer. Cllr Darby proposed, seconded by Cllr Scott to negotiate directly with the farmer, with a more formal arrangement to be put in place, to charge a nominal rent with 6months notice. The rent was set at £100 a year. Any agreement would be drafted by a land agent.

It was agreed by 10 votes for and 1 against to negotiate directly with the farmer. A more formal arrangement would be put in place, drafted by a land agent to charge a nominal rent with 6 months notice. The rent was set at £100 a year.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm

Mayor.....