

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 4th APRIL 2019 AT THE PORTLAND COMMUNITY VENUE

PRESENT: Councillors Nowak (Chairman), Flack (Town Mayor), Wild, West, Thurston, Cocking, Atwell, Draper, Hughes.

IN ATTENDANCE: Karon McFarlane (Town Clerk), Andy Matthews (Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and Portland Community Partnership), together with 3 members of the public.

19/1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Tim Gomm and Mr Stuart Cave (Town Crier).

19/2 – MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING, 4th April 2018

The minutes having already been formally agreed, were noted.

19/3 – MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Item 18/8 – Electors Items – Comer Homes. Cllr West raised the issue of Comer Homes and the fact that there had been no activity on the Hardy Block site in the last year and further that, in the event that Comer Homes were to proceed they would now need to remove a number of now mature trees. She acknowledged that the original planning application had included the removal of the trees, however as these trees were now a year older it would no longer be appropriate to fell them. She requested that action be sought from Comer Homes to make a commitment to proceed. The Chairman stated that he had recently written to Comer Homes and the response received had indicated that the site would be active by the Spring although rumour had it that Comer Homes were looking to sell the site. Cllr Kimber advised that he had received a complaint from a member of the public that children were getting into the site and there were concerns over their safety. Cllr West confirmed that this was still the case.

Action on the Chairman to advise the new Council (when elected) that, as agreed at the Annual Town, the residents of Portland requested that a letter be written to the Chief Exec of Comer Homes inviting him to come to a Full Council Meeting to present their plans for the site. On behalf of the residents he is also to propose that a letter be written to the Chief Exec of Dorset Council advising of the concerns raised and in addition that all public bodies are to receive a copy of the letter.

Item 18/8 - Electors Item - Public Meeting – Mr Vincent asked whether it remained the intention of the Council to hold a public meeting? Cllr Draper stated that a public meeting had been held at St Georges Centre in August last year. At this meeting the Chairman reminded Mr Vincent that he had agreed that another public meeting would be held if one was required. He added that as the majority of people at the meeting had accepted the increase in the precept there had been no requirement to hold a further meeting.

19/4 – CHAIRMAN’S REPORT, 2018/19

Cllr. Nowak gave a verbal report. He began by saying that today was a significant date as a year ago today he had just returned from a meeting with Dorset County Council having asked for a community bid for the Portland Community Venue (PVC), he added that a lot of work had been undertaken by a number of Councillors to bring the financial package together and to obtain a LEADER grant to fund the alternations. He applauded all of the Councillors and stated that he felt that the had ‘grown up’ as a Council. He remembered that when he had initially been appointed to the Council, they had done nothing of this kind and now, not only had they obtained this facility for the people of Portland but that the Council were now also providing additional services to the community. He believed that the Council had moved forward and now the Council is moving on again, not only with the provision of services but with enabling others to provide services, which is a great opportunity for the Council and the people of Portland. The opportunity to deliver a range of local services to local people by a local council could only benefit Portland, he continued that he believed that in looking back in a few years’ time everyone would be amazed at how much had been achieved by this Council. He went on to express his thanks to all of the Council staff and Councillors for having the right ‘can do’ attitude to deliver what was required of them. He believed that in looking back 2019 would be remembered as a seminal year in the history of Portland Town Council.

19/5 – TOWN MAYOR’S REPORT, 2018/19

Cllr. Flack itemised some of the more memorable events of the mayoral year; a full list of these can be found at Annex A to these minutes.

19/6 – FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2018/19

In the absence of the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO), Cllr Sue Cocking (Chairman of the Finance Committee) presented the Financial Report for 2018/2019. A copy of this report is held at Annex B to these minutes.

Mr Vincent asked whether the HMRC rebate had been applied for? Cllr Cocking explained that we were just waiting for the last few payments to clear and the claim would be submitted.

Cllr Kimber enquired as to the recommended general reserve figure. Cllr Cocking responded that NALC stated that this should be between 50% and 100% of precept, and once the HMRC rebate had been applied for, the general reserve comfortably within this figure. She explained however, that with the increase in the precept figure for 19/20 this figure was likely to increase.

19/7 – TOWN CRIER’S REPORT, 2018/19

The Town Crier was not present. The Chairman delivered his report and a copy of this can be found at Annex C to these minutes.

19/8 – ELECTORS’ ITEMS

- a. Mr Andy Matthews asked whether it was the intention of the Council, now that the Neighbourhood Plan was established, to re-start a Town Plan? Cllr Draper felt that until the Neighbourhood Plan had been approved and in place, which may be some months, then it would not be appropriate to start the Town Plan at this point. Cllr Wild proposed that the existing Town Plan be made defunct as it was no longer valid. Cllr Draper suggested that this should be brought up at a Planning and Highway’s Committee where the item could be discussed in more depth.

The issue of the Town Plan to be added to the agenda at the next convenient Planning and Highways Meeting.

- b. Cllr Hughes asked when the Council intended to put in place a new Town Council website, as the current one still referred to access issues for a building that was no longer occupied. Cllr Draper responded that a new member of staff was about to start, and it would be a task for her. He further explained that given the level of change that had been ongoing the website had not been a priority. Mr Matthews raised the issue of the archived documents and ensuring that they remained accessible. Cllr Draper assured Mr Matthews that the archives would remain accessible.

19/9 – DATE OF NEXT ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The date of the next meeting was set as 2nd April 2020

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm.

Signed Dated
(Chairman)