

UNADOPTED

POLEGATE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Thursday 12th February 2009 in the St John's Hall, St John's Church, Polegate at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllr. S Barber (Mayor), Mrs C Berry, Mrs J Bigsby, G. Carter, M. Cunningham, Mrs D. Joy, R. Martin, Mrs M. Piper, S. Shing (8418-8426)
Mrs J. Voyce, T. Voyce, A. Watkins and T. Wright

103 members of the public
2 members of the press

8417 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr J Harmer

8418 Declarations of interest

Cllr Shing – Personal and non-prejudicial – Polegate War Memorial Recreation Ground – the doctors are known to him

8419 Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 12th January 2009

The minutes were approved as a true record and the Mayor was authorised to sign them.

8420 Matters arising from the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 12th January 2009

8283 – Eastbourne/Hailsham Triangle

The clerk distributed the notes from the joint meeting with Cllr Pam Doodles and representatives from other parish/town councils in the Triangle.

Following this meeting Polegate had received an invitation from the Local Strategic Partnership to attend a Local Development Framework workshop
On 18 February 9.30 – 12.30 – Cllrs Voyce and Wright would attend.

8421 Notification of any items to be dealt with as urgent

None

8422 Statement by the Cllr Barber - Mayor

Cllr Barber stated that as Polegate Town Council had been approached by Apollo Capital Projects, on behalf of Downlands Medical Centre and Manor Park Medical Centre, Council entered into preliminary talks to explore the viability of a new combined GP surgery being built on part of Wannock Road recreation ground. Council recognised that there is an urgent need for a modern medical centre, large enough for expansion and improvement of clinical services, to be built within the existing settlement of Polegate. To this end, it took the responsible decision to obtain more information before making any decision on the proposal. It was necessary for the early meetings to be conducted in closed, confidential session as matters of finance were being considered.

Having progressed the proposal to its current stage, Council requested that Apollo convene a public meeting in order to share the information with residents and to get feedback from them.

A meeting was held on 24th January 2009, at which Apollo made a presentation to the public, supported by statements from doctors representing both of the surgeries involved. Included in the presentation were a list of other sites that were also under consideration as being suitable for the new building and the reasons why they had been discounted.

Having spoken to fellow Councillors and others who were also present, he took the opportunity to say how shocked and appalled they were at the vitriolic response by some of the people who spoke against this project at the public meeting. Some participants were visibly shaken by the verbal outbursts to which they were subjected. He added that any such aggression would not be tolerated tonight. If anyone presenting this proposal or representing Polegate Town Council is intimidated or threatened, this meeting will be adjourned and will proceed in closed session at a later date.

With this in mind, he invited members of the public to speak on any items on this evening's agenda and asked for a proposal to suspend standing orders.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENDED

8423 Opportunity for Public Comment

20 members of the public took the opportunity to comment on the Proposal to put a new medical centre on the Polegate War Memorial Recreation Ground.

The following comments, concerns and objections were raised by members of the public, those who spoke are listed below:-

1. The covenants which had been placed on the land in 1922/1926 should be adhered to.
2. The land had been given to the people of Polegate for recreational use as a memorial to those who served in the 1st World War and as such should be protected against development.
3. The plans which had been published by Apollo were misleading and the Recreation ground + medical centre would not support a cricket pitch and football pitch.
4. Cricket could be lost to Polegate forever if the development was allowed to go ahead as it takes an extremely long time to relay a cricket square and it is a very costly exercise.
5. Other sites within the town centre should be re-examined and Apollo should not just be allowed to choose the easiest option which would make most profit.
6. The extra traffic which would be created by this proposal could have an adverse impact on adjoining roads with additional vehicles trying to park etc.
7. Recreational space in the Polegate/Willingdon area is already short of that which is required – this recreational space should not be developed.
8. Polegate War Memorial Recreation ground is not the ideal location especially if any future developments for Polegate take place in the North – it is too far to walk. Other options in the Town Centre should be sought i.e. Black path
9. The loss of a pharmacy in the Town Centre would be detrimental to the centre.
10. Doctors should be supporting the use of recreational space rather than trying to build on it.

Mr P Woolmer

Mr M Garnett

Mr B Hepburn

Mr K Morson

Mr N Underdown

Mr F Northcott

Mr D Hancock
Ms K Fenton
Mr Catchpole
Mrs Glenister
Mr Fillery
Mrs R Battles
Mr S Black
Mr Vaid
Mr Cades
Mrs Williams

The following comments and observations were put by those supporting the proposals, those who spoke are listed below:-

1. There is a need for a new medical centre in Polegate which combines both doctors' surgeries.
2. The patient surveys conducted by both practices are in favour of the proposals.
3. Apologies were given on the misleading plans for the sports pitches and efforts were being made to address these issues
4. The elderly population requires a new centrally located surgery.

Mr S Clark
Dr Brown
Dr Hammet
Mr G Leeper

It was noted that 13 letters of objections had been received by the Council and 2 letters in favour.

STANDING ORDERS REINSTATED

8424 Polegate War Memorial Recreation Ground

Each councillor was given the opportunity to speak on this subject:-

The following observations and comments were made by councillors:-

Cllr Watkins spoke against the proposal and said that he had been opposed from the beginning. He urged Council to respect the covenant which protects the land which had been given to Polegate as a memorial to those to fought in the Great War rather than a stone memorial. He drew attention to the letter to all councillors from Sabrina Harcourt Smith the eldest grandchild of Rupert Sackville Gwynne MP, one of three who had donated the land, asking Council to uphold the covenant. There used to be a plaque at the Ground which had vanished and the only reference to the thirty three dead was in St John Church which was mostly locked up. There is a large deficit of recreational space in Polegate and Council should not give up the little they have. He strongly supported a new medical centre but not where proposed. He was concerned that failure to make a clear decision would cause delay in finding another more suitable site and as suggested by others funding from the PCT to be withdrawn. He urged members to support the motion proposed by Cllr Mrs Berry and to reject the one proposed by Cllr Carter."

Cllr Martin spoke on the fact that the covenant was previously broken in 1988 when the Council Offices were built on the land and only one person had voted against this – David Day- and that the tennis courts had also been built on. Support for the medical centre should be a long term decision rather than a short term one and he was strongly against the proposal to put a medical centre on the Polegate War Memorial Recreation Ground.

Cllr Mrs Piper spoke on the fact that she was not a political animal and she had been mortified by some of the comments that had been made. Doctors are

Encouraging us to take up sports, but the population was getting older and the surgeries were needed. The funding could be withdrawn bearing in mind the dire Straights the country appears to be in. It would be detrimental to have no surgeries. She went on to say how much she loved the countryside and worked hard to protect it but a new surgery was essential to Polegate.

Cllr Shing declared an interest as the doctors were known to him. He went to inform Council that he had received many letters on this subject. He felt that Polegate would benefit from a new medical centre but he was aware that many residents were concerned about the possible increased traffic and the impact that patients' parking could have on the adjoining streets. Polegate and Willingdon are lacking in recreational space and there is no guarantee that although the proposed development does not at present use the whole of the recreation ground that future extensions will not encroach even further. The breaking of the covenant on this ground would out way the advantages of a new medical centre. The developer has not exhausted all the possibilities of other sites. The patients will benefit but not as much as the developer. The High Street will degenerate if this is allowed. We need to look elsewhere for a site, but we do need a new Medical centre.

Cllr Cunningham spoke that he returned to Polegate some 21 years ago because of all of the benefits, open air, the sea etc. but in that time Polegate had lost several things including the carnival. Some things had been missed. We should be respectful of others' views – there is a need for a new medical centre, we should as a Council look at everything and then put it back to the public.

Cllr Mrs Joy spoke against the proposal and the fact that if Council owns land that land should remain in Council ownership – Council should not be selling off assets.

Cllr John Rogers (Deputy Mayor) spoke that although Council empathised with a lot of the views expressed and Council was aware of the amount of interest this had generated, he quoted from the Good Councillors' Guide relevant passages which explained both the Council's and Councillors' roles in situations such as this. Difficult decisions are never easy but Council must look at the evidence and debate the Health Centre whilst examining the use of all leisure facilities in Polegate.

8425 Motion proposed by Cllr Carter seconded Cllr Mrs Bigsby

"Council suspend discussions with Apollo Capital Projects on the purchase of part of Wannock Road recreation ground until they have re-visited all other potential sites, including those previously discounted. In the event that Apollo can evidence they have exhausted all other options, Council would be willing to reconsider the proposal, subject to public support."

The vote was taken in respect to this motion

For:- 8

Against:- 5 - Cllrs Mrs Berry, Joy, Martin, Shing and Watkins

The motion was carried

8426 Motion proposed by Cllrs Mrs Berry seconded Cllr Martin

"This Council ceases to look at Wannock Road Memorial Recreation Ground as a site for the new medical centre and will work with the Primary Care Trust, local doctors and others to find more suitable site."

The vote was taken in respect to this motion

For:- 5 - Cllrs Mrs Berry, Joy, Martin, Shing and Watkins

Against:- 6

Abstentions:- 2

The motion was lost

8425 PCSO report

The report for January was noted

8426 District/County Councillors' Reports

A written report from Cllr Don Broadbent was circulated – Cllr Roy Martin's report would be circulated by the Clerk.

8427 Update from Standing Committees

General Purposes Committee held on 21st January 2009 – Cllr Voyce wished to refer back to committee for further deliberation the item on the proposed new road at Brightling Road and the involvement of the Model Engineering Club. This was agreed. The minutes of the meeting were then adopted.

It was resolved to adopt the minutes of the following committees:-

Planning – 8th December 2008, 12th January 2009, 27th January 2009

Personnel – 28th January 2009, 10th February 2009.

8428 Financial Report

a) Approval of accounts for payment

Council considered the schedules of Accounts for Payment and the accounts for payment were approved.

b) Monthly financial update

This was noted by members.

8429 Town Clerk's Report including Health & Safety Report

The Clerk reported on the thank you letters/cards she had received for the Mayor's donations from his fund which had been given out at the presentation for Quality Town Councils.

Raglan Homes had arranged a public consultation for their proposed development at Lynholm Road Polegate on Thursday 19th February 2009 3.00p.m. – 6.30p.m. at Polegate Community Centre.

8430 Correspondence noted

ESCC – Changes to bus timetables

ESCC – East Sussex 2nd Local transport plan 2008 Progress report – Information.

8431 Communications from the Town Mayor

The Mayor announced the Quality Town Council Awards Evening had been a great Success and he thanked all those who attended.

8432 Date of the next cycle of meetings

General Purposes - 17th February 2009 at 7.30p.m.

Planning – 25th February 2009 at 6.30p.m.

Finance – 25th February 2009 at 7.30p.m.

Full Council – 9th March 2009 at 7.30p.m.

8433 Resolution to take business into confidential session

It was resolved that due to the confidential nature of the next business to be transacted the press and public be excluded from the rest of the meeting.