

**UNADOPTED
POLEGATE TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Special Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 26th February 2019 Council Chambers, 49 High Street, Polegate BN26 6AL at 7.30 pm

Present: Cllrs Ms A Snell, D Watts, D Murray, Mrs C Berry, M Falkner, Mrs S Dobson, S Shing, Mrs W Alexander, D Dunbar, J Portway, Mrs M Piper (11)

Not Present: Cllrs B Goodwin, Mrs M Phillips, D Shing, Cllrs R Shing (4)
39 members of the public

Minute No.	Subject/Resolution
12631	Opportunity for public comment The Mayor welcomed those present and reminded them that the meeting was not a public meeting but a meeting of the council held in public. A resident spoke on behalf of keeping the library service and supporting the volunteer group. She stated that she was willing to give up her time to run organise and fun raise for the library in order to secure its future. She stated that it was not just about books but about taking children there; about reading; learning; belonging to something; looking after something that isn't yours; about providing a service for the whole community; for people to borrow books; to sit and read them; to read a newspaper; to have company; to sit in silence; to be acknowledged; to have the use of a computer; to be able to apply for a job online; to get onto the internet and use it; to be able to log in and send an email to your grandchildren abroad. There is a group of local people who have come together who car enough to give up their time and make this happen. People who have the skills needed and to show people that community spirit is a priority in the town. A resident spoke about her passion for the children to have access to a library in Polegate. She stated that she had campaigned about a library since September 2017. She stated that she had been taking her children to the library for story time and "Rhymetime" for around 10 ½ years. She said that it got people out of the house to meet new mums and children and that the library was excellent to support mental health locally. She stated that it was a safe and great place for everyone to meet. She stated that she was committed to being involved and part of a community library in Polegate. She stated that she ran Rhymetime each week. The community needed books and a wide variety of them, libraries prepared children for reading and things at school. She stated that by 2022 there was likely to be 630 children at Polegate school. She felt that the community needed to show the babies, nursery attendees and others the beauty of what a library could offer. Rhyme and Storytime helped children's speech and that they could still do the summer reading challenge. A resident stated that she was a mum of three and spoke on behalf of her children. She stated that her daughter had been devastated when the library had closed and still asks why it's not open. She stated that she was prepared to help to get the library open again. She stated that at home she didn't have the space to offer her children the number of books they like to read. It helped her

	children's speech develop. She stated that she would be volunteering to help keep the library open. A resident stated that there was a management team prepared to help run organise and fund raise the library to keep it open. They were passionate about keeping the library open and volunteering their valuable time to ensure this happened and make it a success. A library was not just a book lending service, it was a place for the vulnerable. There may be elderly whose only human interaction is through the library; the isolated mum who relishes the support and friendship of others in the library; libraries are a haven for people where community services have been ground into nothing and were vital and couldn't be measured in books alone. A resident spoke that Polegate was good at community working and had already lost a lot of other events and services in and around the town. He stated that he felt the library was an essential part of learning for Polegate school as it enabled children to carry on learning after school. A resident commented that not many people had come to the meeting and he felt that his showed it all. He referred to appendix F (the original figures of assessing the library running costs in 2017/18). He referred to the % of households in Polegate who had not responded. He referred to street lighting budgets. He stated that he thought there were ample buses from Polegate to go to other libraries. The Head teacher at Polegate school spoke in contrast to that she had come to represent the children of Polegate school. She stated that she had seen a real drop in reading since the closure. Along with that the summer reading challenge where children's reading dropped, they had noticed a significant drop. There used to be around 250 families taking part in the library (summer reading) challenge, since the library closed, they had had 40/30. She stated that reading opens up doorways to children and was at the heart of the success of the children. A resident stated that she did not drive and that there were not sufficient bus services to the other libraries, even by car the last few months had taken car driver almost 45 minutes to get out of Polegate because of the traffic lights. She stated that it was all well and good people saying that the buses went to Langney, but that in reality there was one bus that went to Langney and that didn't go after 5pm. She stated that she was happy to give her time and she felt that the library was a good and valuable thing to have in the town.
12632	Apologies for absence Cllrs R Shing, D Shing, B Goodwin, Mrs M Phillips
12633	Declarations of interest in any items on the agenda Cllrs D Watts, S Shing, Ms A Snell, D Murray District Councillors; Cllr S Shing County Councillor for another area; Cllr D Murray Pevensey & Cuckmere Water Level Management Board. Cllr M Falkner stated that he was the council's rep as governor at Polegate school.
12634	Polegate Community Library – report and recommendations for the library working group The lead councillor for the library working group updated the council on the research and work carried out that was summarised in the

report.

He stated that the working group had looked at all of the options thoroughly and that the options that had been available were to do nothing and leave the library closed, which the working group didn't consider a good option. The working group had full delegated responsibility. Initially they had decided to go ahead with the Service Level Agreement (SLA) but that paperwork from the County Council had been delayed until July and then it became transparent that it was not a viable option as it would not allow fund raising from various methods and a number of other major obstacles in generating the £72,040 to run the library. It was for this reason that the working group had come back to council to satisfy council of the change in direction and the reasons. He stated that the working group had considered alternative locations and had assessed the pros and cons of that and other funding options. This had led them to the only option being a volunteer group running the library and for council to support them in doing that. They had contacted the volunteers and established a management group who would be willing to take on the roles and responsibilities of running the library. He stated that they were very skilled and a number having been librarians and library assistants. They were supported by 3VA, other volunteers at local community libraries and the volunteer's network. He stated that it was being recommended that council support running the library at the costs of £17,000 per year (although it as I wasn't expected that they would need this as initial indications were that fund raising could be up to £10,000 after 6 to 8 months. He stated that the group were also recommending supporting the £6000 IT provision should the volunteers wish to go to model 2. He explained that the working group had considered the funding required to come from the Ear Marked Reserve 339 Office Alterations Reserve, but it wasn't expected that this would be needed and the rest could be allocated from the street lighting reserve only if required, although this was not expected to be the case. He stated that the County council deadlines had been sprung upon the council and each time the group had managed to meet those deadlines. The meeting had been called before the final paperwork had been prepared by the management group as the county council had once again required a decision on the Service Level Agreement before the end February. He stated that council had to make an informed decision, but it wasn't expected with initial costs that the council would be required to spend the whole £17,000 each year. He said that the working group had felt that if a decision was not made the county council might sell the land and that would mean the library as it stands could not be saved. He agreed that the working group had looked at the low footfall but this had not persuaded them that the service was not required. It had shown that the £72,040 was not the best way to spend the public money as the county council could still sell the land and that money would be wasted. He stated that the volunteers were not only enthusiastic but also very skilled to be able to make this a success and he had every confidence in them. He stated that if council did not go ahead it was more than likely that

houses would be built there longer term.

A councillor stated that the working group were only asking for the £17,000 for the three years and he was aware that the likelihood of that being needed was low. As soon as the CIO/CIC (Charitable Incorporated Organisation/ Community Interest Company) was set up they would be able to claim back rates relief and this would reduce the amount straight away by around £6000. The group had plans to carry out a lot of the services themselves to further reduce costs. He was also aware that some of the capital works may be needed and the initial money may cover that once costs were reduced in council tax. He was aware that the EPC was already carried out. It was in his opinion highly unlikely that the group would need the full £17,000 p.a. over the three years. He stated that the county council required them to provide a business plan and they had almost finished preparing that (draft on the table for councillors). He stated that he was aware that they were likely to be able to apply for a number of grants which would further ameliorate the costs further.

A councillor commented that the group already had volunteers who had experience of claiming grants for their libraries involved. He asked if there would be a representative of the council attending the meetings, it was clarified that this was expected to be the case to feedback information both ways. He referred to the research in the paperwork regarding the car park and the high costs to rent a modular building. He referred to the high return rate, although it was low in numbers. He felt that this should be supported.

A working group member stated that the modular building had been looked at but it was very high cost and better long term to pay rent in a local shop or to the county council if they allowed that.

A councillor commented that it was a vital service for children and older people using the service.

A councillor referred to the campaign to save the library which had been unsuccessful and that he felt it was value for money compared to other services the council ran. He stated that the money was not coming from the street lighting reserve unless needed and it was coming from the office alterations reserve initially.

A councillor commented that a resident had raised the point that it was a small number of residents who wanted this, but he commented that there were a number of services that the council provided that lower numbers enjoyed, for example the public toilets, but a library was used by all age groups and it was important to keep this in perspective. He stated that it was very important for the education of children and he would be backing the working groups motion to support the community library with the initial seed money for the three years at £17,000. The group would be free to improve the facility and increase or alter the hours to suit people better in the longer term. For example, late night opening for people who worked etc. he stated that this was an initial acceptance whilst the details were arranged with the county council. He expected that the costs would be below £10,000 in reality and there were many funders who would cover this. (grants) for example the Garfield Weston Trust.

A councillor asked about the membership charging, the clerk stated

that she did not believe that would be possible and one of the reasons that the SLA had not been accepted, but that the group had looked at donations instead.

A councillor stated that he would have wanted to know this sooner. A councillor commented that she thought it was very good value for money and that she was more than happy to help the management volunteers fundraising.

A councillor stated that the details would be looked at by the working group as the county council would need to send through a lease to be agreed also before progress was made and the group would need to set up the CIC/CIO. He stated that he thought that the group had a marvellous range of volunteers with a multitude of skills.

It was resolved to support the community library by facilitating the setup of a CIC/CIO to run the library with the help of the volunteers, model 2 or 3 (county council guidance) in accordance with the draft business plan (being written by the management group.) [Model 2 if computers were required and model 3 if not].

That an ear marked reserve be set up for the £17,000 p.a. initially from the office alterations reserve (339) and to support for the three years.

That the library working group to continue to complete and submit the application as required and negotiate the lease with ESCC and liaise with the volunteers on the management group to run the library ensuring that all matters of compliance are adhered to. This is particularly important if model 3 is taken forward with regards to IT systems. The working group to continue to have delegated authority through the delegation to the clerk in liaison with the working group.)

To support the volunteers in obtaining funding in order that future years are either part of wholly self-funded.

To mitigate the financial risk, grant indemnities will be set up as per drafts, as required.

To mitigate the financial risk and service risk, to assist in the setup of the CIC/CIO as appropriate and if required to pay the legal fees required to create the CIC/CIO (estimated to be around £3000 to be paid from general reserves).

VOTE All in favour Cllrs Ms A Snell, D Watts, D Murray, Mrs C Berry, M Falkner, Mrs S Dobson, S Shing, Mrs W Alexander, D Dunbar, J Portway, Mrs M Piper

The meeting closed at 8.35pm

Signed Mayor of Polegate _____ Date _____