

Minutes of a meeting of the **SPALDING TOWN FORUM** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 18 July 2023 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

R A Gibson (Chairman)

D Ashby
M Le Sage

I Sheard
G J Taylor

J Whitbourn (Vice-
Chairman)

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors B Boulding, S Chauhan and M Hasan, together with John Bland (Civic Society), Roger Perkins (Castle Sports Complex Bowls Club) and Pastor Kevin Taylor (Churches Together in Spalding and District)

In Attendance: David Jones (Pedals), Vanessa Browning (Community Mind Matters), George Slinger and Geoff Hoare (Spalding in Bloom) and the Press.

	<u>Action By</u>
<p>1. <u>ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN</u></p> <p>Councillor Gibson was appointed as Chairman for the period 2023-2027.</p>	
<p>2. <u>ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN</u></p> <p>Councillor Whitbourn was appointed Vice-Chairman for the period 2023-2027</p>	
<p>3. <u>MINUTES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2023</p> <p>AGREED:</p> <p>That the minutes be signed as a correct record.</p>	
<p>4. <u>ACTIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the actions of the meeting held on 9 March 2023.</p> <p>AGREED:</p> <p>That the actions be noted.</p>	

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5. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were none.

6. SPALDING SPECIAL EXPENSES BUDGET UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the Chief Finance Officer (PSPS), who gave a verbal overview on the Spalding Special Expenses Draft Budget.

The Chief Finance Officer advised:

- That a detailed and comprehensive report including information on figures would be available at the next STF meeting.
- The budget for 23/24 was considered by the Forum on the 31 January 2023. A budget of £240,000 had been set and covered the cost of the services delivered that were deemed to be within the Spalding town boundary.
- As Spalding was without a Parish Council, the service provided funds for allotments, parts of Ayscoughfee Gardens, the Spalding Cemetery, Halley Stewart Grounds, Monkshouse playing field, Christmas Town Centre decor and contributions towards voluntary organisations.
- Special Expenses provided services that were delivered by the district council but were identified purely for the residents of Spalding town, hence why a special expenses budget.
- The Spalding Special Expenses budget covered the cost of ground maintenance charges to maintain green areas, utility charges, business rates, staff recharges for the individuals who delivered services, insurance, and electricity costs.
- At the annual meeting of the Full Council on the 17 May 2023 the terms of reference for the Town Forum had been ratified.
- Going forward the terms of reference would be a standard item in the agenda pack, for members referral.

The Chairman had requested a meeting with the Chief Finance Officer, in order to resolve queries in relation to the Spalding Special Expenses Budget. In essence Spalding Town Forum's budget was ringfenced for certain areas, similar to a Parish council, without the executive powers. Spalding Town Forum could facilitate decisions on a small level. The budget contained a reserve fund, that would need Cabinet endorsement for future events.

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The Chairman thanked the Chief Finance Officer for the summary provided.

7. SPALDING TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Chairman asked Spalding Castle Ward Member, Councillor Taylor, to provide a verbal update on the Spalding Town Centre Improvement Plan:

Councillor Taylor gave a brief update for information purposes to the Forum, with a full presentation to follow at the next meeting.

- Spalding Town Centre Improvement Plan had been established in 2019, and a steering group created to look at initiatives to improve Spalding Town Centre. This was halted due to the Covid outbreak.
- Within the last 3 years Spalding had benefitted from new CCTV, covering most areas of Spalding including car parks.
- Ayscoughfee Gardens had seen improvements and there was ongoing development to the Ayscoughfee tennis courts.
- Spalding Bus Station and Spalding Cemetery had both benefited from enhancements.
- The enviro-crime wardens had been designated by SHDC to address the issues of anti-social behaviour and flytipping.
- He confirmed that successful market towns in the UK were under-pinned by successful partnerships and that SHDC had submitted a bid for funding to attract investment and to assume responsibility of initiatives and events.
- Cabinet had approved a budget of £280,000 for the Spalding Gateway Public Realm Project, which would incorporate new seating, planters, bins, and cycle storage. The aim of this project would be to introduce notable improvements to town centre locations and SHDC had been in communication with a number of contractors to potentially start work this calendar year.
- Spalding Re-Connect project received funds from the National Lottery to promote the heritage of the town through the Heritage strategy. Work would take place with events led by Transported, with a view to create a Riverside Art and Heritage Trail. Ayscoughfee Hall had been given National Portfolio status through the Partnership with Boston and East Lindsey. The Partnership had secured £1.9 million, which would see arts and cultural events delivered from Ayscoughfee Hall and Gardens, which in turn would help to increase footfall into Spalding Town Centre.

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- Recent past events initiated by Spalding Town Centre Improvement Plan included the King's Coronation event, and the Armed forces parade. Both of these events were very successful. The Spalding Flower parade, which made a comeback in 2023, would be scheduled to take place again in 2024.
- The Spalding Health and Wellbeing Hub would replace the current Castle Sports Facility. SHDC had received £20million from the Government's Levelling Up fund. SHDC would add an additional £6million. The £26million pound sports project would be implemented by 2026.
- An expert regional consultant recently reviewed Spalding and noted the positive aspects of the town. Consultation and discussion would take place regarding the empty shops in the town centre and how this would be rectified.
- A more detailed presentation would be provided at the next meeting of the Forum.

Members raised the following questions:

- Would funding be available for a bandstand in Ayscoughfee Gardens?
 - The Spalding Castle ward member proposed that if residents vocalised this would be desirable, it would be a request that could be explored.
- A question was raised regarding the planters that would need to be replaced/repared in the Town centre.
 - Councillor Taylor stated that the renewal of the planters would be starting in the latter end of 2023. Officers would be liaising with contractors to procure the best price and the Forum would be advised further when officers had acquired all the information.
- A question was raised regarding the £35.000 (£30.000 from arts council grant) that had been earmarked for the Abbey Passage project, and when would work commence.
 - Councillor Taylor acknowledged that various debates surrounding the location of the project had been voiced. Currently no definitive date had been agreed as to when work would commence, however the Spalding Town Centre Improvement Plan group would be closely working with art groups and local school children to deliver the Art Project. He suggested the Forum could reconsider the location.

It was recommended that this would be discussed by the Forum and would be added to the agenda for the next

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meeting. It was proposed to invite Transported who would be leading on the project to make inquiries of their plans for Abbey Passage. The Forum could work in cohesion with Transported to enhance this particular area with public artwork.

- A question was raised regarding the timescale for the Art Project, could this be delayed until after the next scheduled STF meeting, to enable Officers and Members time to discuss Transported propositions.
 - Councillor Taylor replied that as a date for commencement had not been set, it was possible that the forum may seek to tweak or change location for the site of the Art Project. Transported had formerly received funds from the Arts Council for this venture and would strive to work with the Forum to utilise the Arts Grant to deliver residents aspirations.

8. **TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER (TRO) UPDATE**

The Chairman of the Forum provided an update on the Spalding Traffic Regulation Order, which raised the following points:

- The Chairman established that the TRO had been formally raised by the previous Chairman of the Spalding Town Forum, who had proposed that the Town Forum would undergo a period of consultation with the public in and around Spalding areas.
- The current TRO stated that no vehicles were to enter the pedestrianised areas between the hours of 10am – 4pm Monday to Saturday, and from 8am on market days.
- A survey had been produced and distributed to gain knowledge on 'What the public wanted'. The Forum had asked a cross section of residents, businesses, cyclists, and drivers to complete the survey and offer their views.
- Two action days had been set up in the Town Centre to promote the survey, which asked a variety of questions to give a full overview of what the public would want to see as a TRO.
- The Spalding Town Forum stood essentially as a mechanism to assist the town centre, and to ensure the town centre could become modernised and survive. Feedback was essential to be able to obtain a rounded view of what would be required. The results would be presented to the Town Forum, foremost, for conversation and then for ideas and all options to be explored. The Forum would then construct a report for Cabinet, who would determine in what direction to proceed.

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- The Chairman advised that the response to date had been satisfactory.

Members made the following comments/questions:

- A question was asked as to whether the Police could assist.
 - The Chairman responded that only the Police could enforce the current TRO. PCSO's had been educating the public on the restrictions which was within their remit, the Police unfortunately did not have the manpower to continually patrol the area.
- A question was asked as to when the results would be accessible to the forum.
 - The Chairman replied that the survey results would be available for discussion at the next meeting.
- The representative from Pedals had been in contact with Sir John Hayes MP to attempt to gather all authorities collectively to enforce the TRO, without success.
 - The Chairman put forward that there was a need to consider new ways of resolving this issue, as the Police had insufficient capacity to continually patrol the town centre. Solutions needed to be introduced and put into place.
- Parking meters that had previously existed in the town centre were removed when the TRO came into place.

The Chairman was in agreement to host a meeting at the earliest time scale to deliberate the survey results and inviting along any relevant parties to agree a way forward.

9. SPALDING IN BLOOM

The Chairman introduced to the Forum two representatives from Spalding in Bloom to provide a verbal update.

A brief history was provided by the representatives to the Spalding Town Forum with the focus on how Spalding in Bloom started and the successes and achievements of the group.

- Currently Spalding in Bloom were not entering competitions to resurrect the success that they had previously achieved. Volunteers would be required to sign up and get involved to rejuvenate Spalding in Bloom.
- The Chairman had extended his support and recently 121

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baskets had been erected in the town centre and looked amazing. This had been done in collaboration with Birchgrove Garden Centre and further baskets had been displayed on Spalding Town Bridge.

- The Chairman acknowledged that some funds had been allocated for Spalding in Bloom for 2023, however the cost of watering the baskets was very expensive. Some businesses had contributed towards the cost of £30 per basket.
- Funds had been allocated for this financial year; however additional investment would need to be raised to continue for future years. The Forum would need to examine how moving forward, Spalding in Bloom would be funded. Previously it was sponsored by the Spalding Town Centre Improvement Plan, this would no longer be an option, albeit having the town centre blooming would enhance the town and surrounding areas, encouraging visitors, and supporting local businesses.
- It was noted that residents would make observations in regard to the appearance of Spalding Town centre, whether good or bad. There had been some great positive comments received on how vibrant the baskets looked.
- The Chairman thanked the representatives from Spalding in Bloom for all their achievements.
- It was suggested that Spalding in Bloom could begin to re-enter competitions, as they previously had enjoyed great success. This would benefit the town and, volunteers could be invited to become involved to help grow Spalding in Bloom.
- Councillors could potentially help fund Spalding in Bloom from their Councillor Designated Budgets, as well as exploring other options of sponsorship to bring a fresh modern twist to Spalding.

Members made the following comments:

- A question was raised regarding an area known as the landing stage, and whether it would be kept and maintained by Spalding in Bloom. Could a co-ordinator be assigned to organise different areas around Spalding Town Centre that could be allocated for volunteers and groups to maintain.
 - The Chairman called on any volunteers to contact Spalding in Bloom, and any development to be communicated back to the Town Forum.

10. UPCOMING EVENTS

The Communities Team Leader enlightened the group on

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initiatives, projects and events which provided health and wellbeing to the district, adjacent to planning and organising town events that would benefit residents and businesses, which covered the following points:

- Throughout the summer months events would take place around the rural areas in the district, to encourage active play.
- Communities would present a 'Give It a Go' sports taster event on Sunday 13 August 2023 at the Halley Stewart playing field, to enable children and adults to try something new.
- During the seasonal period, two events had been planned;
 - the Spalding Pumpkin Festival on Saturday 7 October 2023 from 11-3pm, the event would include musical performances, craft and food stalls, pumpkin and harvest themed arts and crafts, alongside activities, sculptures, and pumpkin displays. Fancy dress competitions and various other activities would keep visitors entertained throughout the event. The Saturday market would take place to allow shops and market traders alike to take full advantage of the extra footfall. To enhance the event, local shops and business could take part in a pumpkin window display competition which would be posted on social media and displayed in the local press to enable members of the public to vote for their favourite display.
 - Christmas Celebration event would take place on Saturday 25 November between 11-5pm, to bring festive cheer to Spalding town centre, the previous two Christmas town events had been funded by the Spalding Town Centre improvement plan, and preceded by the Welcome Back Fund., This allowed the communities team to bring an enhanced event to the residents of Spalding. For this year's celebration it had been proposed to bring extra seasonal market stalls to boost the Saturday market, local community groups would give performances, to include carols and Christmas songs, incorporating lots of fun street entertainment, together with carols by candlelight. The team would be advertising a Christmas trail to take place throughout December to encourage local seasonal shoppers. Businesses would be encouraged to take part in the Christmas window display competition.
- The Communities Team had applied for UKSPF funding to hold a springtime event in Spalding Town centre and currently waiting to hear if their bid had been a success.

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- Any ideas for sponsorship or funding would be welcomed.

Members made the following comments:

- An idea was raised to encourage shoppers to visit various stores to find a prize.
 - The Communities Team Leader noted this and mentioned that they had a similar event called the Nutcracker trail, which encourages the public to visit different shops and business to locate the Nutcracker.
- A question was asked if it would be possible to hold the pumpkin festival as a weekend event rather than a day event.
 - The Team Leader responded that last year they held a Night Light Event in Ayscoughfee gardens and recently Transported had put in a bid in order to fund something similar. If successful, the Communities Team would help support Transported with this event.
 - To run these events over a couple of days required additional funding so at present there were no plans to continue the event through to Sunday.
 - It was noted that the Communities Team did not have a large budget. Previously some events had been enhanced due to receiving extra funding which at present was not available. STF would try to help support and investigate alternative funding streams.

11. **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

The Chairman had proposed to hold the Spalding Town Forum meeting bi-monthly, to enable more continuity between meetings.

- The Chairman encouraged more groups/organisations to join the Forum, to better ascertain what the town needed, where funding was not readily available, the Forum would look to assist.
- It was noted that additional, positive, and proactive bi-monthly meetings would be of benefit.
- The Spalding Castle ward member recognised that the first meeting of the STF had been very positive and looked forward to seeing continued actions and outcomes.
- The Democratic Services Manager noted that with the complete support of the forum, bi-monthly meetings would be introduced and dates would be looked at for the next meeting.

The Chairman mentioned that if any additional groups wished to join the Town Forum, they were invited to make contact. Various local groups would be welcomed to join the Forum, where ideas could be discussed to hopefully move forward with positive

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actions for Spalding Town centre.

Members made the following comments:

- The Vice- Chairman raised a question for the Communities Team Leader, to enquire whether the Communities' Team would offer support to groups who wished to hold events and to advise with regards to public liability insurance.
 - The Communities Team Leader advised she would liaise with the Legal Team regarding insurance.

The Team Leader added that they could offer guidance and advised that further information was available on South Holland's website. The information was designed to assist groups on how to organise and plan events along with the Safety Advisory Group who possessed a wealth of knowledge and included the Police, Lincolnshire County Council, and Fire and Rescue. For groups wanting to host events, the website was an excellent place to start.

12. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

One item of additional business was raised in relation to the potential closure of the Ticket Office at Spalding Railway station.

- The ticket office provided a valuable service to many people and gave the public the choice of how they purchased their tickets. The station staff provided an excellent service, giving great customer service and information to customers.
- Volunteers had given up hours of time, transforming the Railway Station into an attractive area and it was now one of the most attractive stations on route to Lincoln.
- The Vice-Chairman informed the group of the consultation that was currently underway and encouraged everyone to respond.

AGREED:

That the Vice-Chairman raise an objection to the closure of the Ticket Office at Spalding Railway Station on behalf of the forum.

The Vice-Chairman briefly addressed the group to inform the Forum of her involvement with Community Speed Watch. These groups would now be run in Spalding and the Vice-Chairman had attended three training sessions and had invited anyone to join up and help with safety in Spalding.

13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

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The date for the next meeting was scheduled for the 17 October 2023 at 6.30pm.

It was noted, however, that this meeting would be rescheduled to a September meeting, and members of the Forum would be notified shortly.

(The meeting ended at 7.56 pm)

(End of minutes)