

Minutes of a meeting of the **SPALDING TOWN FORUM** held in the Virtual Meeting via Zoom, on Wednesday, 29 September 2021 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

R Gambba-Jones (Chairman)

A C Cronin

R A Gibson (Vice-Chairman)

M Hasan

C J Lawton

J D McLean

A M Newton

G P Scalese

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillor G J Taylor, together with Pastor Kevin Taylor (Churches Together in Spalding and District)

In Attendance: G Scott (Spalding Transport Forum), R Perkins (Castle Sports Complex Bowls Club), J Bland (Civic Society), the Assistant Director – Finance, the Assistant Director – Communities and Operations, the Assistant Director – Property and Delivery, the Interim Strategic Finance Manager, the Town Centre Improvement Plan Co-ordinator, the Democratic Services Manager, the Democratic Services Officer and the Democratic Services Assistant.

1. **MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2021.

DECISION:

That the minutes be signed as a correct record.

2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.**

There were none.

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MINUTES.**

The Chairman took the opportunity at this item of the agenda to thank Councillor Newton for her hard work on installing a memorial at Two Plank Bridge, Spalding for Pilot George Furniss who tragically died when his plane crashed at the site in 1953.

Members asked where the Authority was at in relation to the roll out of further brown garden waste bins.

The Chairman replied that the Environmental Services team were

Action By

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keeping up with delivery rates but this had slowed down recently due to the HGV driver shortage the Council was currently experiencing. He confirmed that the initial waiting list had been addressed so it was now new demand that was being dealt with and the Council had also just ordered some more new bins. He also stated that if Members had any concerns regarding residents being on the waiting list for a long time they should contact the Environmental Services team.

**4. SPALDING SPECIAL EXPENSES YEAR END OUTTURN
2020/21 & 2021/22 QUARTER 1 FORECAST**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director (Strategy & Resources) (S151) which provided information on the Spalding Special Expenses Year End Outturn 2020/21 and 2021/22 Quarter 1 forecast.

The Assistant Director – Finance introduced the report and noted that the figures took into consideration the approval of the use of reserves for cemetery improvements.

The following points were raised by Members of the Forum:

- What was the situation with funding for future Christmas events in relation to Spalding Special Expenses?
 - Officers confirmed that this year's events were being funded by the Spalding Town Centre Improvement Plan budget but a more substantial and consistent budget for Christmas events needed to be looked at for future years.

- If the money for Christmas events was to come out of Spalding Special Expenses, would it come from the Christmas decorations budget?
 - Officers confirmed that the Christmas Decorations budget would be used to buy lights as assets.
 - Officers would need to have further conversations regarding where Christmas events could be fitted in to the budget and would bring this conversation back to the Forum at a later date when options had been considered.

- The Council needed to ensure that Christmas lights were properly maintained and Christmas decorations should be a key contribution from Spalding Section 106 agreements.

- Work had been carried out on the parking down Monks House Lane prior to the May 2021 elections but did not

appears within the report, was this paid for via the Elections budget?

- Officers responded that they would confirm this with Members outside of the meeting.

5. TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME UPDATE

The Forum received a presentation from the Town Centre Improvement Plan Co-ordinator regarding an update on the Spalding Town Centre Improvement Scheme where the following points were highlighted:

- The Town Centre Steering group had been split up into different sub-groups based on five key themes which then reported back to the main group quarterly on progress made:
 - Travel, Transport and accessibility – engaging with Lincolnshire County Council to influence the bus investment plan and making a case for investment in Spalding bus services.
 - Economy and Skills – partnership running with Boston College to explore how the College's Spalding Campus could act as a catalyst for driving footfall into Spalding through training, education and skills. The Group were exploring a proposal to increase the space available for businesses start-ups within the Campus and building on the work of the digital skills hub that opened at the Campus in May 2021.
 - Events, Culture, Promotion and Awareness Raising – looking at developing the long term events programme for the town to aid footfall and the promotion of the town and district by engaging with visit Lincolnshire.
 - Environment, Public Realm and Heritage – conducted an audit identifying areas to improve in the town centre and developing a strategy to prepare for future funding opportunities.
 - Business, Markets and Independent Retail – exploring models to bring together small and large businesses to work together to improve their offer to residents and visitors. The group were currently looking at what external advice and support was available, learning from other successful towns.

- The Council had already successfully delivered some

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improvements to the town centre, including:

- Recovery and Growth programme - £1.06m of grant money had already been approved to support businesses in the District
 - Additional marketing of independent businesses across the District
 - Town Centre shopper initiative scheme – due to launch in November 2021.
 - Reopening of the South Holland Centre
 - Recent contract given to capture footfall data in the town.
 - Deep clean and refreshment of toilet facilities.
- Pumpkin Celebration would take place on Saturday 9 October 2021 with an extra 27 stalls on the market, a sculpture competition, window dressing competition and a scarecrow competition.
 - Christmas Celebration event 2021 would take place over two days in the first weekend of December including a festive food court, light switch on and the nutcracker trail.

The following issues were raised by Members of the Forum:

- Concern was raised at the unhygienic state of the town centre at the present time as there was pigeon mess on the pathways, plants that were in the Hall Place planters needed replacing and the benches in that area also needed cleaning.
 - Officers responded that they shared the concerns of Members around the level of pigeon mess in the town and unfortunately the street cleansing team were assisting the refuse team due to a staff shortage.
 - Officers confirmed that the Council were looking at getting a private contractor to tackle the worst areas in the town and funding for this was available through the Government's Welcome Back Fund.
 - Officers also confirmed that conversations were ongoing with town centre partners to ensure that solutions were found for this problem.
- Suggested that birds of prey could be nested in the town centre to help with the pigeon problem and that this method had been used successfully by other towns.
- The Transport Forum queried why they had not been included in the Travel and Transport sub-group.
 - Officers confirmed that they would have a

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conversation with the transport forum outside of the meeting and would invite them to the next meeting of the sub-group.

- Concern that the pigeons were being fed purposefully by some residents, could some communications be put out to warn residents not to do this?
 - Officers responded that the Environmental Health team has been spoken to regarding the pigeons and clear signage would be put in place within the town centre.

- Would a Christmas Market be taking place this year and what were the dates for the Christmas event?
 - Officers confirmed that the Christmas Celebration event would be held on the 3rd and 4th December 2021 and markets would still be held every Saturday leading up to Christmas.
 - Officers also stated that originally a four day event had been planned with an external provider but they had unfortunately had to pull out of hosting Spalding's celebration.

- Where would this year's town Christmas Tree be coming from?
 - Officers confirmed that the tree would be coming from the same provider as last year and would be a 35ft tree.
 - Officers were also hoping to increase the number of Christmas lights from last year.

6. UPDATE ON FORMER DRINKING FOUNTAIN IN SPALDING

The Chairman read out a statement about the former Drinking Fountain in Spalding from the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Planning, who was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting, which covered the following points:

- Officers were looking at a range of options for the future of the fountain and a report would be brought forward soon with a series of short-term and long-term options for the re-location of the Fountain which was currently in secure storage.
- Whatever option is taken forward would necessitate capital expenditure and likely need to acquire formal planning permission along with specialist heritage advice and

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consultation with the Public prior to a decision being made by Members.

- Officers confirmed that they were currently working to narrow down the options and the forum would be kept briefed on this item.

The following points were raised by Members of the Forum:

- Agreed that the Fountain was an important asset to the town and were pleased that the Public would be consulted as part of the process.
- The Spalding Civic Society stated their wish to be engaged with as part of the consultation surrounding the Fountain as they had an interest in its history.
- Asked about the history of the Fountain and whether it was a listed asset.
 - Officers confirmed that the Fountain was not listed but it is of a Local Heritage interest and it was built in 1873.
 - Officers suggested that it may be useful to provide a history of the Fountain at a future meeting of the Forum.

7. INDIVIDUAL FORUM MEMBERS PROJECTS UPDATE

Individual Members provided an update on their projects from the last meeting:

- Adopt a Red Telephone Box (Councillor Sneath)
 - Councillor Sneath confirmed that she was in conversation with the Ayscoughfee Hall Manager and the Conservation Officer.
 - Ayscoughfee would use the box as a history box and would update the displays within the box as appropriate.
 - The box may be slightly repositioned to allow easier access but no planning permission would be needed for this.
- Welcome to Spalding Sign – Barrier Bank (Councillor Taylor)
 - Unfortunately Councillor Taylor had given his apologies for the meeting so was unable to provide an update.
 - The Town Centre Improvement Plan Co-ordinator confirmed that this had been raised at the

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Environment, Public Realm and Heritage sub-group and therefore they would contact Councillor Taylor about this to connect the two ideas

- Steppingstone Bridge - improved lighting and design (Councillor Gambba-Jones)
 - The Chairman informed the Forum that he had attended a meeting with Network Rail about this issue where it was confirmed that they own the bridge but Lincolnshire County Council were responsible for lighting the footpaths.
 - The Chairman confirmed that he now had contact with a Council Liaison Officer at Network Rail which the Leisure and Communities Manager had the details of should Members have any issues regarding the rail lines.
 - Councillor Taylor would be contacting the Highways department at Lincolnshire County Council to discuss more lighting for the footpath leading up to Steppingstone Bridge.
- Members of the Forum expressed concern at the length of time it was taking to progress items raised at the Forum meetings.
 - The Chairman responded to say that it was difficult to progress actions due to Spalding not having a Town Council and action was quicker in villages given that they had Parish Councils.
 - The Chairman also stated that there needed to be more community action taken by residents if they want to improve their local area and the Councillors were doing as much as they could.

8. CLOSURE OF TWO PLANK BRIDGE

The Chairman led a discussion around the closure of Two Plank Bridge in Spalding where Members of the Forum raised the following points:

- Clarification was needed on when the closure was happening as different messages were being given.
 - The Chairman stated that he had had a conversation earlier that day with County Council where it was confirmed that the closure of the bridge would not be taking place imminently as the Council has not secured the land needed to start on the Spalding Western Relief Road work.
 - It was likely that work would not begin until after

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- Christmas so the bridge would be open until January at least.
- The County Council would be releasing a statement within a few weeks without a specification of the start date for the works and that the bridge would be open as soon as possible.
- Concern over how long the works would actually take and whether the bridge would really be open as soon as possible.
 - The Chairman suggested that this item could be added to forthcoming agendas for discussion so that the Forum could track the progress of the works.

9. LCC ACTIVE TRAVEL PLAN

The Chairman led a discussion around the now aborted LCC Active Travel Plan, where the following points were raised by Members of the Forum:

- Councillor Sneath confirmed that the Travel and Transport sub-group of the Town Centre steering group had relooked at the old travel plan to see if anything within it would still be a good idea.
 - It was confirmed that the main point that came out of the travel plan was making access to the river at High Bridge easier.
- The Chairman asked whether any of the proposals made by PEDALS had gone forward.
 - Councillor Sneath confirmed that this was not covered at the sub-group meeting but she would be meeting with the County Council Officer responsible for the cycle and walking plans to look at the PEDALS proposals.

10. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

The Chairman shared that he had been sent a photo of planters that were rolled out into place in Louth to stop people driving through the town centre and wondered why we could not use a similar type deterrent in Spalding. He asked the Forum for their thoughts where the following points were raised:

- Needed to ensure that enforcement is carried out by the

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Civil Enforcement Parking Team in relation to people parking in the town centre.

- Suggested having number plate recognition cameras at the entrances to the town centre.
- Hoped that this issue would be considered as part of the Town Centre Improvement Plan.
- The Council needed to decide whether traffic through the town centre was allowed or not as currently there was only a no traffic order enforcement on market days.
- Asked whether any barriers put in place would impede Emergency Services vehicles.
 - It was confirmed that the Emergency Services would not take any issue with a barrier being installed.
- Concern raised that the CCTV installed in the town centre was under-utilised.
- Cycling through the town centre was a particular concern and measures needed to be put in place to control their speed.
- Suggestion that the Police should be prosecuting more people parking in the town centre.

11. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Forum would take place on Wednesday 8 December 2021 at 6.30pm.

(The meeting ended at 8.22 pm)

(End of minutes)