

Minutes of a meeting of the **SPALDING TOWN FORUM** held via Zoom on Tuesday, 25 January 2022 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 A Porter

G P Scalese

G J Taylor

Apologies for absence were received from Pastor Kevin Taylor (Churches Together in Spalding and District)

In Attendance: Councillor E J Sneath (Advisory Member), Councillor R Grocock, G Scott (Spalding Transport Forum) and R Perkins (Castle Sports Complex Bowls Club), J Bland (Civic Society), Joe Cades and PC Craig Lockton (Lincolnshire Police), the Assistant Director – Finance, the Assistant Director – Strategic Growth and Development, the Town Centre Improvement Plan Co-ordinator, the Democratic Services Team Leader and the Democratic Services Assistant.

12. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2021.

DECISION:

That the minutes be signed as a correct record, subject to Councillor Sneath's attendance being recorded.

13. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were none.

14. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MINUTES.

There were none.

15. SPALDING TRAFFIC RESTRICTION ORDER

Following a discussion at the last Forum meeting regarding the Traffic Restriction Order in place in Spalding Town Centre, PC Craig Lockton was in attendance to talk through the TRO, where he raised the following points:

- The order prohibited vehicles from entering the town centre

Action By

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between 10am and 4pm Monday to Friday but there were exceptions for emergency vehicles and delivery vehicles.

- It was evident when Police had looked into the issue that many people were not following the order and when drivers had been stopped, the Police had been met with hostility and many excuses.
- The sign was clearly displayed in Herring Lane and there was no excuse for drivers ignoring it.
- Key findings from the Police's investigation were that trope data was hard to come by and it was difficult to enforce the order due to other commitments.

The following points were raised by members of the Forum:

- There was strong debate surrounding the enforcement of the order – some wanted stronger enforcement while others wanted to remove the order entirely. Had a survey been done to understand the public's opinion on how the issue should be approached?
 - The Chairman responded that the idea was something to propose to County Councillors to progress. It would be difficult to make the order only enforceable for 3 days a week
- The TRO should be enforced and needed to be sorted out. It may be useful to publish information about how many tickets had been given out to deter others - did the Police have that information available to give out?
 - PC Craig Lockton confirmed that the Fixed Penalty Notice was £90, and he would find out the number of tickets given out and give this information to Forum members outside of the meeting.
- Members had previously expressed concern to the Police and they confirmed that they would put a concerted effort into enforcing the TRO. The TRO needed to be enforced to protect pedestrians, cyclists, and people who were hard of hearing. There should be a sign earlier on the junction to encourage people to not drive through the town centre. It was noted that the parking charges at Broad Street car park were very reasonable and therefore there was no reason that drivers should be parking in the Town Centre.
 - PC Craig Lockton advised that there was an option available to install an automatic self-raising bollard linked to the CCTV facility in Boston and a similar one had been installed in Peterborough.
- It was a matter of safety and there were two sides to the

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argument. Was there any way of conducting a public consultation on the issue?

- The Chairman advised that to override a TRO the County Council would have to carry out a public consultation. If an objection were to be received during the consultation, the County Council would have to go through a formal, costly process to override the order.
- Could Hall Place be turned into a car park with a high charge to prevent the public from parking in the area and encourage them to park elsewhere?
 - The Chairman advised that the idea would open up a whole range of issues and the Council would have to consult on any charges being implemented along with working out how the charges would be enforced.
- Could a spare freighter be put on the junction between 10am and 4pm to prevent access?
 - The Chairman advised that the method had been tried in the past but SHDC were asked by LCC to stop.
- Joe Cades – Beat Manager was also in attendance and informed the Forum that there were not any known repeat offenders for driving through the town centre and the self-rising bollards mentioned earlier in the meeting were worth looking into. They could be remotely controlled and there could be an intercom installed to allow access through if needed. The bollards were approved by the Department of Transport but would cost around £20-£25k to install two.
- Amendments to the TRO would have to be considered if a bollard was installed.
- The suggestion of rising bollards had been raised around 10 years ago, but had not been a popular solution. What were other smaller market towns doing to help solve this issue?
- Could the road be narrowed with planters so that only 1 bollard would be required?
- Was it not possible for the CCTV camera located in Herring Lane to be converted to a number plate recognition camera?
 - The Chairman responded that this had been asked

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before, but no definite answer given. The County Council needed to advise what could be done to solve the issue without spending a lot of money. He asked for County Councillors to look into this and report back at the next Forum meeting.

- Could the current parking enforcement arrangement with LCC be extended to the town centre area as well?
 - The Chairman advised that he would liaise with officers to establish whether this was possible under the current contract.

16. DRAFT BUDGET 2022/23

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development) and S151 which considered the Spalding Special Expenses Draft Budget 2022/23.

The Assistant Director – Finance introduced the report and noted the following key points:

- The Council Tax Base for Spalding had increased from 9,384 to 9,490 properties.
- There was a 1.61% increase for Spalding Special Expenses for a Band D property from £24.18 to £24.57
- The Spalding Special Expenses budget for 2022/23 was £233,130 which was a 2.75% increase from 2021/22
- Appendix A detailed individual areas of the Spalding Special Expenses budget
- Appendix B was a four-year forecast for the Spalding Special Expenses budget.

The following points were raised by members of the Forum:

- Officers were thanked for providing a clear breakdown of the Spalding Special Expenses budget. The Town Forum was set up originally to consult on the budget for Spalding.
- Utilities costs had increased by 30%, why was that?
 - Officers responded that there were increased utility costs for all buildings that the Council owned which was reflected in the increased costs for buildings paid for by the Spalding Special Expenses budget.
- Why had the employee costs for Spalding Special Recreation increased?
 - Officers confirmed that this was due to pay increases.

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- Why had the premises costs for allotments increased?
 - Other members confirmed that the Council rented the allotments at Horseshoe Road from the Church and this was the reason for the cost increase.
- Why had contributions to employee costs gone up?
 - Officers confirmed that contributions to employee costs had increased due to pay increases.
- Why was so much budgeted for maintenance at the Halley Stewart Playing Field?
 - Officers responded that further information would be sought from the service area and distributed to Members of the Forum after the meeting.
- Members were surprised that there was only £6.9k of income projected for the Halley Stewart Playing Field for the year.
 - The Chairman responded that the field could only be used for sporting events and was a heavily subsidised facility.
- Christmas events for 2021 had been really good – where could information be found showing how much had been spent on the events?
 - Officers confirmed that they would be bringing the Q3 budget report to the next meeting of the Forum which would detail costs up to 31 December 2021.
- Would there be similar Christmas events for 2022?
 - The Chairman responded that the core Christmas budget was included within the report but there was extra money available from the Town Centre Improvement Fund and the ambition was to have funding available for Christmas events every year.

17. TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

The Town Centre Improvement Plan Co-ordinator presented an update on the Town Centre Improvement Plan, highlighting the following points:

- Lots of work was taking place within the 5 sub-groups of the steering groups.
- The Business, Markets and Independent Retail Group were exploring the potential of a Business Improvement District and appointing a retail advisor to assist independent retailers across the district. They had also

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overseen the running of Shop Local prize draws in November and December and were also seeking investors who may be interested in the vacant buildings in the town centre. The Recovery and Growth Grant had supported businesses across the District, and the Council was currently rolling out an Omicron grant for leisure and hospitality businesses. They were also working on providing independent business promotion videos which allowed businesses to showcase their offer.

- The Environment, Public Realm and Heritage Group had instigated a district wide deep clean by the Environmental Services Team, working with the Procurement Team. They were looking at specialist pest control companies to help with the pigeon problem in the town centre, an improvement scheme for the public toilets around the district, and were exploring further funding opportunities for town centre improvements.
- The Events, Culture, Promotion and Awareness Group had overseen the Pumpkin Festival and Christmas celebration events. They were also working with Transported who had recently received an £800k grant from the Arts Council to provide Spalding Super Saturday events in the town centre and they had sent a list of attractions to Visit Lincolnshire to add onto their website.
- The Travel, Transport and Accessibility Group had consulted with the County Council on how to make the town centre more accessible for cyclists and pedestrians and lobbied LCC to influence their bus service improvement plans.
- The Economy and Skills Group were working on improving Boston College's offer at their Spalding Campus to help improve footfall in the town centre. It was proposed that further business start-up space be provided in the Campus building on the digital skills hub which had opened in May 2021, and they were also looking to offer a range of different courses.
- Lots of important work was taking place simultaneously to improve both Spalding and Holbeach town centres.

The following points were raised by Members of the Forum:

- Concern was raised about M&Co closing down as the management had been open to staying in Spalding but couldn't find any premises. Had the Council given them any advice?
 - Officers confirmed that the Economic Development Team were working closely with the M&Co manager to identify vacant premises that may be suitable.

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- What were the chances of M&Co remaining in Spalding?
 - Officers responded that they were keen to ensure that the business stayed within the town centre.

- There had been an article in The Voice which suggested that the Johnson Water Fountain would be placed in Ayscoughfee Gardens - was this true?
 - Councillor Grocock, Portfolio Holder for Assets and Planning, responded that the relocation of the fountain was an issue that he had been aware of for a number of years. It had originally been taken down to allow the new WW2 memorial to stand next to the WW1 memorial in Ayscoughfee Gardens. Officers had looked into several options for the relocation of the Johnson Water Fountain, and Ayscoughfee had been picked due to the Johnson sisters having lived at Ayscoughfee Hall. A space had been identified for the fountain in a prominent place within the gardens and a heritage sign would be placed in front of it to explain its history., but a planning application would first have to be submitted..
 - Councillor Grocock had been made aware that the Civic Society had started a petition to have the fountain placed back in the town centre but stated that the fountain could not be relocated there due to its original lead piping which could cause health and safety problems, and there were safety concerns with placing it back in the town centre.

- Some members commented that other towns and cities had brought back old water fountains, so it was disappointing that Spalding wasn't able to do the same.

- Concern was raised that there had been no public engagement around the issue and no discussion with the Civic Society.
 - The Chairman advised that it would be wise to wait and see the public reaction to the petition.

- It was suggested that shops could open later on a Sunday in the summertime - was this something that could be trialled?
 - Officers responded that they would look into this issue.

- There had recently been an article in a local newspaper

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which had stated that the cost to the Council to keep the markets running was £200k per annum - how was this possible?

- Officers did not have the information available during the meeting but would circulate further information after the meeting.

18. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

There were none.

(The meeting ended at 8.20pm)

(End of minutes)