

## TOW LAW TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Tow Law Town Council held on Tuesday 16th March 2021 commencing at 6:30pm held via Zoom due to Covid-19 restrictions.**

**Present:** Councillors P. Stokes (Chair), C. Batson, T. Batson, J. Fowler, K. Geraghty-Shewan, E. Mather, F. Nicol,

**Also Present:** County Councillor R Manchester

Due to the absence of the Clerk Councillor K. Geraghty-Shewan agreed to take the minutes

**019/21      Apologies**

There were none

**020/21      Declaration of Interests**

Cllrs Stokes & Nicol declared an interest in item 025/21 Tow Law Community Association

**021/21      Approval of minutes of meeting held on Zoom 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

The Minutes were approved.

**022/21      Matters arising**

Cllr Stokes reported that 24,000 dog poo bags had been ordered and informed the council that the drain outside the chemists was blocked and appeared to have collapsed.

**023/21      Country Councillor Report**

County Councillor Manchester reported on the following:

The Council has a commitment in its budget on the Cattle Mart although it may not move forward until Q4/22. He said that his plan was to have the Mart delisted with Historic England so that the site could be brought back into use. He reported that Historic England haven't been doing site visits due to the pandemic. Cllr T. Batson asked what the plan was for the site and said that he was unhappy about it being delisted. Cllr Manchester replied that the building is beyond saving and that the people he'd spoke to in Tow Law just want something to be done with the site. Cllr T. Batson responded that he would like the Town Council to be able to buy the land and do something for the community, but Cllr Manchester pointed out that he thought the cost would be prohibitive.

Cllr Manchester reported that he had asked the Clean and Green team to carry out a find and fix session in Tow Law

He also reported that Crook Community Leisure have submitted plans for a swimming Pool in Crook

He reported that under the Towns and Villages strategy the Area Action Partnership had been allocated £600,000 including £300,000 to support economic regeneration and £100,000 for the Covid Recovery Program.

He also reported that the risk management plan for the fire service had been issued and that he hoped to be able to fund the bench at Thornley Road Cemetery out of his Neighbourhood budget.

Cllr Stokes raised the issue of the rubbish bin in the community garden which hadn't been renewed when the rest of the furniture had and asked if the bench near the Co-op could be replaced. Cllr Manchester agreed to follow this up.

Cllr Mather asked if the In & Out signs in the car park at the Co-op could be repainted as they were being ignored and causing issues with drivers ignoring them. It was pointed out that the Co-op car park is private land but Cllr Fowler said she would ring the owners to see if this could be sorted out.

Cllr Manchester finally informed the council that the Polling Station which is usually in Baring Court will be moved for the upcoming elections to Tow Law Millennium Primary School due to worries over Covid-19.

**024/21 Chairman's report**

Cllr Stokes said that most of his report is covered elsewhere on the agenda but raised the issue of WiFi for the Town Centre, Cllr Manchester said that the scheme was still in the very early stages of planning/feasibility studies

**025/21 Tow Law Community Association (update)**

Cllr Stokes reported that the new radiators had been fitted in the lobby and this would make the area more cost effective to heat.

Cllr. Batson asked why the Community Association had fitted radiators that were powered by gas and not gone for Electric Storage Heaters run from the solar panels on the roof. Cllr Stokes replied that this was the recommendation given to the committee.

Cllr Stokes also reported that the community centre might be able to run children's activities from 12<sup>th</sup> April subject to Government guidelines and implementation of test and trace and lateral flow testing.

**026/21 Millennium Green**

Cllr Stokes reported that disconnecting the water supply as discussed at the last meeting wasn't as straight forward as he had hoped. We are currently billed through a company called Wave who are part of East Anglian Water. He has a form to fill in but needs to find the water meter. He asked if anyone knew where it was and as no one did suggested that people look for it if they are on the Green.

It was noted that Millennium Green needs a large clean up but that it is not possible until at least the 17<sup>th</sup> May - due to Covid restrictions. Cllr. Nichol pointed out that there had been a large amount of fly tipping on the green so it would require more than just litter picking. Cllr Manchester said he would ask the County Council if they could supply services on a one off basis to help and Cllr Stokes suggested applying for a Covid Recovery Grant to cover costs. It was suggested that Councillors inspect the site to ascertain the scale of the problem once regulations allow. Cllr. T Batson asked if CCTV could help find the culprits and Cllr. Fowler said she would see if the CCTV from the gym could help.

**027/21 Bank Accounts**

Cllr Stokes reported back from last month's discussions saying that the issue required him to go and have a face-to-face meeting with someone from the bank but that wasn't possible at the moment because he is still shielding. He also reported that we need to set up Online Banking on the Town Council's Co-operative account to make paying bills easier.

**028/21 Car Parking at Rear of High Street, Tow Law**

The Chair reported that he had made the pre-application to the Council and had received communication from the Highway's Officer. He reported that the officer had indicated that he thought that there was only room for 9 parking spaces whereas we had applied to create 13. This was due to issues regarding the footpaths and the boundaries which appear to be under dispute. The Chair said that a better plan was required so that the actual boundaries could be determined. As this didn't appear to be available in the Town Council office and there was no indication as to the name of the solicitor who had handled the purchase of the land Cllr T Batson proposed that the chair apply to the Land Registry for a more detailed plan of the boundaries. This was seconded by Cllr Nicol and approved by the Council.

**029/21 Queen's Platinum Jubilee**

It was noted that there would be a long weekend between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022 to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, but it was decided that any discussion of events to commemorate the occasion should take place after the election in May.

**030/21 May Elections**

It was pointed out that the elections for the Town Council are in May and that if Councillors wish to stand for election, they should fill in the forms which are available on the council website

Cllr Geraghty-Shewan posted the web address in the chat section of Zoom - <https://www.durham.gov.uk/nominationpacks>

Applications open on 26<sup>th</sup> March and the closing date is 8<sup>th</sup> April

**031/21 Member's Reports**

Cllr Geraghty-Shewan enquired about the bus stop on Dan's Castle which currently is without a roof. Cllr Manchester agreed to follow this up.

Cllr Fowler reported that the gym needs a new treadmill, and that Cllr Manchester has provided £3,000 of the cost from his neighbourhood fund. Cllr Mather proposed that the council make up the rest of the cost (approx. £500) and that as long as the figure is in that area then the Chair would provide the funds once the actual cost is known. This was seconded by Cllr Nicol and approved by the Meeting.

Cllr C Batson enquired if there was any specific person on the council that was responsible for identifying and applying for grants and asked if there should be.

Cllr Nichol reported that the Community Centre had applied and received funding for 6 laptops and for someone to teach people how to use them (1 year contract) which would go some way towards alleviating issues of those in the community who don't have access to technology. She also reported that Food Bank use had increased fourfold in the past few months.

Cllr T Batson said that he had been impressed by the number of small and micro businesses that had started up in the Town during the pandemic.

Cllr Stokes thanked everyone for their work over the past four years and hoped that everyone would consider continuing as part of the council going forward.

**032/21      Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 6:30pm – we have been advised that holding this meeting is allowed as long as it is not used for electioneering.

The meeting finished at 8:09pm

Signed by the Chairman.....

Dated.....2021