

RAUNDS TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
8th November 2022 at 7.30pm

PRESENT:

Cllr R Levell (Chairman), Cllr R Beattie, Cllr P Byrne, Cllr B Cross, Cllr O Curtis, Cllr A Fernley, Cllr K Harrison, Cllr H Howell, Cllr D Hughes, Cllr M Levell, Cllr T Swailes, Cllr L Wilkes.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr S Tucker, Clerk (Minutes)
Mr S Smart, Operations Manager

CALLING TO ORDER OF THE MEETING:

At the calling of the meeting to order, a minute's silence was observed in memory of former Town Councillor and Chairman Stuart Roberts.

357.22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

358.22 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Notification of requests from members of the public to address the meeting in compliance with adopted protocol.

The applicant for grant funding in respect of agenda item 367.22 attended to address the meeting.

It was RESOLVED that the order of business be amended to consider agenda item 367.22 ahead of subsequent items.

367.22 Grant Application

The Council welcomed the applicant to the meeting to present an application for grant funding towards National Youth Orchestra membership and purchase of a new piccolo instrument.

In response to a member question, the Clerk confirmed the expenditure committed towards grant applications for the year to date, and the remaining budget available.

It was suggested to the applicant that additional funding may be accessible via the Travers Foundation, a charity supporting local 13 to 30 year-olds across sport, music and performing arts. The Clerk undertook to forward details to the applicant following the meeting and the applicant was thanked by members for her attendance.

RESOLVED that a grant of £500 be awarded.

359.22 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Notification of members questions in compliance with the Council's standing orders.

Questions received and responses given are attached at Appendix 1.

360.22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

COUNCILLORS ARE REMINDED THAT IF THEY HAVE EITHER A DISLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST OR OTHER INTEREST IN ANY ITEM THEN THEY SHOULD DECLARE THE INTEREST AND LEAVE THE MEETING FOR THAT ITEM.

None declared.

361.22 Minutes: To confirm the public minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 4 October 2022. (Copy via link.)

The following corrections were tabled to the draft minutes:

- Agenda item 304.22 – the planning appeal application for Burystead Rise had been successfully challenged and **dismissed**; and
- Agenda item 316.22 – Standing Orders were suspended.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 4th October 2022, as amended, be confirmed as a true record.

362.22 Committee Report: To receive the report of the Events Committee held on 18 October 2022. (Copy via link)

It was noted that following the selection of an alternative provider for the funfair at the Christmas Light Switch On event for 2022, a member had received correspondence from the provider of the 2021 event expressing their disappointment at the short notice given that their services were not required on this occasion. It was requested that future decisions be communicated with extended notice, to ensure providers who are not selected are able to seek opportunities to service alternative events elsewhere.

A correction was tabled to the draft minutes, amending Adam Fernley to Cllr A Fernley in the list of members present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Events Committee held on 18 October 2022, as amended, be confirmed as a true record.

363.22 Committee Report: To receive the report of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 20 October 2022. (Copy via link)

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Annual Accounts 2021/22 and allocated Reserves list in be approved;
- (ii) the revisions to Standing Orders be approved, subject to further review from the Clerk; and
- (iii) the minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 20 October 2022 be confirmed as a true record.

364.22 [Committee Report](#): To receive the report of the Planning Committee held on 27 October 2022. (Copy via link)

A number of members expressed disappointment that an application for erection of a mast on Rotton Row had been approved under delegated powers by the Unitary Council, despite the formal objections of several residents and the Town Council.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 27 October 2022 be approved.

365.22 Mayor's Report: To receive the Mayor's report.

RESOLVED that the digest of Mayoral Activities for October 2022 be noted .

366.22 Unitary Councillors Report: To receive reports from Unitary Councillors.

It was noted that there were a number of items relevant to residents of Raunds included in the latest Unitary Council Leader's Update, and it was suggested that the most pertinent items be notified to the Clerk to arrange for the Town Council to assist with publicising them through its own communications channels.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

368.22 Pancreatic Cancer Day: To consider correspondence from a resident asking the Town Council to mark Pancreatic Cancer Day.

The Council gave consideration to the request to light up the Town Hall purple for Pancreatic Cancer Day on Thursday 17 November 2022. It was noted that the equivalent date had been marked in the same way for 2021, but due to lack of publicity, resident awareness was limited. It was suggested that this year's event should be accompanied by greater publicity, and that rather than Council considering repeat annual requests to approve the marking of the event, it should be approved as an event that the Council will commit to marking annually as standard.

RESOLVED that the Town Hall be lit up in purple to mark Pancreatic Cancer Day 2022 on Thursday 17 November 2022, and that the event be added to the events calendar to be marked annually thereafter.

369.22 Saxon Hall Clock: To consider repairing the clock on the Saxon Hall building.

The Council gave consideration to the report which asked it to consider authorising the repair of the Saxon Hall Clock, based on the specialist quotation received.

It was noted that there were insufficient funds remaining in the repairs and maintenance budget to complete the works within the current financial year, therefore it was suggested that Finance and Policy Committee be asked to consider creation of a dedicated budget for the next financial year.

RESOLVED that the repair of Saxon Hall Clock be deferred to the next financial year, pending creation of a dedicated budget.

370.22 Crime Report: To receive a Crime update.

The Council noted the criminal incidents notified by the Town Council to Northamptonshire Police. Members thanked the operations team for their ongoing efforts to reduce the frequency of incidents and keep Council owned spaces safe.

An update was provided in relation to an issue with the Council's CCTV provider, and it was requested that the Operations Manager should seek to progress resolution of this as early as possible.

RESOLVED that the Crime Report be noted.

371.22 Grounds Maintenance Contract: To review and agree the cost for extending the Grounds Maintenance Consortium contract for 1 year from November 2022 to October 2023.

The Council gave consideration to the report alongside an update paper which asked it to approve an uplifted extension to the current contract until December 2023, with the aim to leave the consortium once the year is up and source an alternative contract independently.

It was noted that a further consortium meeting was scheduled to take place on 14 November 2022, to discuss interim arrangements and procurement options beyond the current renewal period.

RESOLVED that the extension to the Grounds Maintenance Contract until December 2023 be approved, subject to this remaining at the maximum cost of £61,968 quoted in the report and achieving best value for the Council.

372.22 Raunds Town App: To review the renewal of the Raunds Town App.

The Council gave consideration to the report which asked it to consider whether to renew the Raunds Town App at a cost of £3,000, or to serve notice to cancel the app in favour of reallocating available resource to the NN app instead.

Members suggested that in order to make an informed decision, further information regarding the functionality of the NN app was required, along with confirmation of whether or not there was sufficient funding available in the budget to renew the Raunds Town App.

RESOLVED that the item be deferred to the next Council meeting.

373.22 Town Twinning: To review a suggestion for a potential Town Twinning arrangement.

The Council gave consideration to a report prepared by Cllr A Fernley which set out a proposal for a potential twinning arrangement with Húsavík, Iceland.

It was noted that there could be potential benefits to such an arrangement, but more information was needed on logistical considerations, such as whether the costs would be prohibitive and whether visiting periods might be constrained by the climate.

RESOLVED that Cllr A Fernley, in liaison with the Clerk, be requested to conduct initial investigations to ascertain the viability of the proposed Town Twinning arrangement.

374.22 Warm Spaces/Safe Spaces: To consider options for supporting the Warm Spaces and/or Safe Spaces initiatives.

Members gave consideration to a verbal update provided by the Clerk, following correspondence between Council staff and Reverend Shorley of Nene Valley Methodist Church in relation to organising a rota of volunteer staff to facilitate a Warm Space and/or a Safe Space for Ukrainians at Saxon Hall.

It was advised that as the Unitary Council is actively coordinating a range of activities in relation to both initiatives, the Town Council should liaise with them to maximise outreach. It was hoped that other community facilities such as the library and churches could also be encouraged to open their doors in order to provide more availability across the week, especially given their central location in the Town.

It was also suggested that in terms of frequency, it might be preferable to set aside a regular slot at Saxon Hall on a once-a-week basis to give prior certainty to both volunteers and service users. Members indicated that provision of basic refreshments would be desirable.

RESOLVED that the Clerk be requested to liaise with the Unitary Council to register Saxon Hall as a potential Warm Space and Safe Space for Ukrainians, and to liaise with Reverend Shorley to ascertain the availability of volunteers on a rota basis.

375.22 Policy Review: To review the Council's Standing Orders.

It was noted that at the previous Finance and Policy Committee, revised Standing Orders had been recommended to Council for approval, subject to any final suggested amendments by the Clerk.

The Clerk proposed the following final amendments:

- Paragraph 7.11 – Removal of duplicated bullet point “oversee the preparation of a medium term financial plan”
- Paragraph 7.21 – Reword to “appoint professional advisers to assist with responding to planning applications should it be deemed appropriate”.
- Standing Order 7.5 – Reword to “A member of a Committee may nominate a substitute to attend a meeting of that Committee in their place, by giving notice of the substitution in writing to the Proper Officer not later than noon on the day of the meeting that they are unable to attend”.
- Standing Orders Section 27 – Removal of Virtual Meeting Guidance, on the basis that there is no underpinning legislation currently in place.

A Member proposed the following additional amendment:

- Standing Order 8(f) – Reword to “Subject to Standing Order 8(e) above, the decision of the Proper Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the relevant Committee, or in their absence another member of the Committee, as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final”.

RESOLVED that the proposed amendments to Standing Orders be approved.

376.22 *The press and public will be excluded from the following agenda item due to the confidential nature of the business under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960*

RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the meeting.

377.22 Clerk’s Update Report: To receive a confidential report from the Clerk.

The Clerk presented the confidential report.

After a discussion it was

RESOLVED that:

- (i) **The Saxon Hall contractual negotiations be progressed towards resolution in accordance with the legal advice received;**
- (ii) **The Amos Lawrence Orchard update be noted; and**
- (iii) **The tree mitigation works be approved.**

378.22 Minutes: To confirm the exempt minutes for agenda item 316.22 of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 4 October 2022.

The corrections to the draft public minutes at agenda item 361.22 were applied to the draft confidential minutes.

Confidential member questions received and responses given are attached at Appendix 1 to the confidential minutes.

RESOLVED that the confidential minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 4th October 2022, as amended, be confirmed as a true record.

379.22 Establishment Report: To receive a confidential report from the Clerk.

The Clerk presented the confidential report.

After a discussion it was

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The temporary statutory officer appointments be retrospectively approved;**
- (ii) The interim appointment of the Clerk be approved;**
- (iii) Staff remuneration be approved;**
- (iv) Time Off in Lieu terms be approved in accordance with Council policy; and**
- (v) The Clerk be instructed to prepare a report setting out a job description and timetable for the recruitment of a permanent Clerk to present to the next meeting of Personnel Committee.**

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 11:05pm.

Approved: (Town Mayor)

Meeting date.....15th November 2022.....(Council)

APPENDIX 1**AGENDA ITEM 359.22****COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS – 8 NOVEMBER 2022****From: Councillor Dudley Hughes, Saxon Ward**

Question: In principle is it correct to revoke Standing Orders for an important issue such as the six month rule that matters decided at a Council meeting shall not be reconsidered for a period of six months.

Response: The Council did not *revoke* Standing Orders, but *suspended* Standing Orders for one item of business. The distinction is important because revocation requires there to be an agenda item specifically for this purpose, whereas suspension does not.

In principle there is general acknowledgement that suspension of standing orders can properly be done, and there was a provision to this effect in Article 16 of the DETR Modular Constitution for English Local Authorities.

Question: Is it permissible that a small group of councillors can put forward a motion without the knowledge of other councillors or the Clerk. Item 9b of Standing Orders states that 'no motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is on the agenda and the mover has given written notice to the Proper Officer at least seven clear days before the meeting'.

Response: Item 9b of Standing Orders relates to Motions for a meeting that require written notice to be given to the Proper Officer. The motion to suspend Standing Orders at the Council meeting on 4 October 2022 was proposed in accordance with Section 10 (Motions at a meeting that do not require written notice), specifically provision xv – to suspend a particular standing order (unless it reflects mandatory statutory requirements). Such a motion is permissible provided that it is carried by resolution (i.e. by a simple majority of those present and voting).

Question: Can the result of a secret motion revealed only at a closed meeting without the clerk's knowledge be considered valid?

Response: Yes, subject to the meeting being quorate and a simple majority of those Councillors present and voting passing a resolution in favour of the motion.

Question: Does suspending standing orders mean that there are no rules for the meeting and therefore it is not a proper meeting but just a discussion with no decision making powers.

Response: A decision to suspend Standing Orders is a decision, by resolution, that for a special purpose or for a period of time one or other Standing Orders shall be of no effect. It is generally understood that those Standing Orders which are core and mandatory (highlighted in bold in the Council's Standing Orders document) should not be revocable, alterable or suspendable by authorities other than in prescribed circumstances. Other Standing Orders are discretionary, and can be revoked, amended or suspended as the authority wishes. At the Council meeting on 4 October 2022, only discretionary Standing Orders were suspended. All other Standing Orders remained in effect, not least Standing Order 3(o) which upholds the cardinal principle that a lawful decision is reached by a majority of Councillors present and voting at a properly constituted meeting.

I reserve my right to ask a supplementary question related to the above.