

RAUNDS TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
14TH September 2021 at 7.30pm

PRESENT:

Cllr S Hughes, Cllr M Levell, Cllr D Hughes, Cllr R Levell, Cllr H Howell, Cllr L Wilkes, Cllr O Curtis, Cllr R Beattie, Cllr K Harrison, Cllr B Cross

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Steve Beech, Clerk
Miss Joanne Coduri, Assistant to the Clerk
Mr Simon Smart, Operations Manager

ALSO PRESENT:

2 members of the public
Matt Coleman to speak re Symposium (via Zoom)

The Mayor welcomed Mr Steve Beech as the new Town Clerk

232.21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr T Swailes and Cllr J Barklamb

RESOLVED to note the apologies.

233.21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

None received.

234.21 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

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

None received.

235.21 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

Cllr H Howell declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 253.21: Library as an NNC Executive member with responsibilities for Library Services.

246.21 SYMPOSIUM

The Mayor moved to suspend standing orders to move item 246.21 forward and allow Matt Coleman to speak

RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders

Following a presentation from Matt Coleman, questions and answers, and a discussion it was

RESOLVED that

- a) Raunds Town Council would join the programme;
- b) Saxon Hall would be made available free of charge to host the event on 17th November;
- c) A budget of £500 was approved towards the event;
- d) A further meeting be arranged to establish the full extent of the Council's commitments to the programme.

The Mayor moved to reinstate standing orders

RESOLVED to reinstate Standing Orders

236.21 Minutes: to confirm the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held 29th July 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 29th July 2021 be confirmed as a true record.

237.21 Minutes: to confirm the minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 20th July 2021

Cllr R Levell presented the minutes (forming the report) of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 20th July 2021 which were received, and the resolutions and recommendations duly considered.

Amendments were made on page 98 under the Saxon Hall terms and conditions to include "subject to the Clerk's discretion".

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee meeting held on 20th July 2021 as amended above be confirmed as a true record.

238.21 Minutes: to confirm the minutes of the Environment, Leisure & Recreation Committee held on 22nd July 2021

Cllr Wilkes presented the minutes (forming the report) of the ELR Committee held on 22nd July 2021 which were received, and the resolutions and recommendations duly considered.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment, Leisure & Recreation Committee held on 22nd July 2021 be confirmed as a true record.

239.21 Minutes: to confirm the minutes of the Events Committee held on 27th July 2021

Cllr Howell presented the minutes (forming the report) of the Events Committee held on 27th July 2021 which were received, and the resolutions and recommendations duly considered.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Events Committee held on 27th July 2021 be confirmed as a true record.

240.21 Minutes: to confirm the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 29th July 2021

Cllr Cross presented the minutes (forming the report) of the Planning Committee held on 29th July 2021 which were received, and the resolutions and recommendations duly considered.

RESOLVED that

- a) the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 29th July 2021 be confirmed as a true record;
- b) The council express its unanimous disappointment that the appeal has been granted and request the Clerk inform local residents of this via social media;
- c) The Clerk write to the local MP requesting he lobby the highways minister regarding the potential danger re the affected roundabout;
- d) The Clerk write to the NNC executive for highways to the same effect;
- e) The Clerk write to Andrew Gray at ARGroup to enquire whether he is aware that the appeal 20/00969/FUL has been approved.

241.21 Minutes: to confirm the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 26th August 2021

Cllr Cross presented the minutes (forming the report) of the Planning Committee held on 26th August 2021 which were received, and the resolutions and recommendations duly considered.

Amendments were agreed to the resolutions at minute numbers:

219.21: RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council that Raunds Town Council will source costs and put forward for a contribution towards ~~the Skate Park~~ outdoor recreation facilities on Amos Lawrence Field.

220.21: RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council that

- a) Raunds Town Council will source costs and put forward for a contribution towards ~~the Skate Park~~ outdoor recreation facilities on Amos Lawrence Field.
- b) If an alternative project is required, Raunds Town Council will source costs and put forward for a contribution towards *improvements to the* Town Square *and immediate surrounding areas as per Neighbourhood Plan Zone*

~~1 to fix the steps leading to West Street and resurface the entrance and parking area, or to make improvements to the Dog Park.~~

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 26th August 2021 be confirmed as a true record with amendments as above.

242.21 Minutes: to confirm the minutes of the Events Committee held on 7th September 2021

Cllr Howell presented the minutes (forming the report) of the Events Committee held on 7th September 2021 which were received, and the resolutions and recommendations duly considered.

Amendments were made under:

228.21 Memorial Centenary Event resolution to include:

Additional bullet points added:

- e) "To enquire if the History Society will make any financial contributions"*
- f) "The Events Committee will co-ordinate the event."*

231.21 Queen's Jubilee resolution to include

Additional bullet point added:

- c) "The Events Committee will co-ordinate the event."*

RESOLVED that

- a) the minutes of the Events Committee held on 7th September 2021 with amendments as above be confirmed as a true record.**
- b) The beacon should be lit on Thursday 2nd June 2022 at 9.15pm.**

243.21 Mayor's report:

It is with pleasure that I am able to report that the chain gang is on the move. Slowly but surely, we are being bold and confident but with careful attention to the Covid impact, events to support Mayor's charities as well as civic services are being organised.

The first event was held by the Lord Lieutenant to raise money for his veteran's charity.

Then of course our own town Summer Picnic. A welcome celebration well attended.

For the Rushden Mayor's Proms in the Park, it was a warm and balmy evening and the band played all the rousing music from the Proms. Everyone enjoyed the relative safety of being outside and sang and waved flags with enthusiasm.

My consort and I attended the Civic leaders open day at RAF Alconbury and Molesworth. This is an event that the USAF takes very seriously, they are keen to communicate with their local community and make us feel very welcome and valued.

It was delightful to be part of the team selecting the Christmas lights feature finalists and I am looking forward to seeing it on display at our Christmas Market and Lights Switch on event taking place on Sunday 28th November.

This Sunday it is of course the Raunds' Mayor's Show, a really splendid event inviting the town to enjoy a feast of entertainment with opportunities to participate in the annual tug of war. There will be wonderful rides for the children as well as good food and performances from local bands and 'One Night Stand'. There is also the Fancy Dress Competition, dress up as your favourite Star Wars Character.

It's a busy time of year with my Quiz Night booked for the 7th October. Teams of 6 will take part, so bring your own team or come along on the night and join one. Quiz master Cllr Richard Levell and his assistant Cllr Magdalena Levell will be mastering the challenge and there will be a ploughman's supper to keep your strength up. Tickets are £10 with profits going to Service Six.

A request for raffle prizes and items that we can put together to make a bumper hamper of food as a raffle prize would be gratefully received.

We have discussed the beginnings of the Town Symposium 'Destination 2035' and I will keep you informed as the programme evolves.

RESOLVED to note the Mayor's report.

244.21 Pancreatic Cancer Day: to consider correspondence from a resident asking the Town Council to mark Pancreatic Cancer Day

RESOLVED that the costs for the lighting of the Town Hall and Church in purple on Friday 19th November be brought back to the next Full Council Meeting.

245.21 Unitary Councillors Report:

Cllr Levell advised members that he had been speaking to highways about the planned T-Junction being installed at the bottom of Brick Kiln Road and North Street that will lead into the new development, and the roundabout at the Red Lion becoming a 4-way traffic light system. These changes will be inevitable as the redesign is down to the developer and we are unable to reverse approved proposals.

Cllr Howell reminded members to read the weekly report from the Leader of NNC and each month there will be a different executive report included to keep everyone up to date.

RESOLVED to note the Unitary Councillors' reports.

246.21 Symposium was moved to follow item 235.21

247.21 Market: To receive a report from the Clerk regarding feedback from traders and members of the public regarding the Friday market

Members reviewed the report as in Appendix 1

RESOLVED to note the report.

248.21 War Memorial Centenary Event: To receive a report from the working party

Cllr M Levell advised members that there will be an event on 9th October 2021 with a short service in the memorial gardens, a parade to the Town Square and an exhibition and refreshments in the library. The poster was discussed and thanks were given to Emma for producing the artwork. Banners will be in the town and care homes, churches, history society, library, shops and Post Offices will have posters and leaflets delivered. A plaque will be produced in commemoration of the event and placed at the bottom of the Town Square noticeboard.

RESOLVED to

- a) **Note the report;**
- b) **Approve a budget of £1000**

Meeting Threshold met: The mayor moved to extend the meeting to the end of the agenda

RESOLVED to extend the meeting to the end of the agenda.

249.21 Annual Accounts: To note the report of the external auditor, Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year end 2021. (AGAR Section 3)

RESOLVED to note the report.

250.21 Grounds Maintenance: To consider staying in the grounds maintenance consortium managed by NNC and arranging a working party to meet and discuss requirements

RESOLVED to register the Council's interest in principle in continuing as part of the consortium. Once more information has been received a working party will be formed.

251.21 Purchase Ledger Software: To consider purchasing a purchase ledger software package

The Clerk tabled a report recommending the purchase of a purchase ledger and purchase order software package for £976.

RESOLVED to purchase said software for £976.

252.21 North Northamptonshire Council public consultation on a summary version of its first ever Corporate Plan

RESOLVED to note the public consultation and the Corporate Plan

253.21 Library: To receive an update on the Council’s current position regarding the library

Members reviewed the report from the Clerk as in Appendix 2.

RESOLVED:

- a) To note the report;
- b) That the Clerk meet with RCLT to offer advice & guidance to enable them to produce a revised business plan, including: latest visitor statistics & other pertinent information;
- c) That the Clerk opens a dialogue with NNC regarding the property;
- d) That RTC re-confirm their commitment to providing library services in Raunds.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 21:02

Approved: (Town Mayor)

Meeting date.....12th October 2021.....(Council)

Appendix 1

Summary	
A report to consider feedback from traders and public regarding the Friday market.	
Attachments	
None	
Report	
1.0	<p>I have visited the market and met informally with several stallholders and members of the public.</p> <p>All I met supported the continuance of both the weekly Friday Market and the monthly Saturday Market which runs from April to September.</p> <p>Everyone praised the council for their highly visible support of the Saturday Market with staff always attending and mingling, banners set up to advertise it and parking restrictions marked and enforced. Staff attendance has a salary cost to the council.</p> <p>The presence of staff on Saturday has been so well received the stallholders have asked whether we can attend to support on Fridays as well. Stallholders understand however that attending a weekly market on a working day will have either an additional financial cost in terms of staffing or a reduction in the ability of the council to carry out normal council business on Fridays if staff are redeployed.</p> <p>The Friday Market is less well attended, particularly by stallholders, despite the council having offered free pitches until the end of 2021. There appear to be only a few regulars, and others have not returned since lockdown, in particular the green-grocer Adam's Apple. I have visited Adam's Apple twice and met with Adam who expressed an interest but has made no commitment to return. Simon Smart, Council Operations Manager, is working on a handful of potentials who have made enquiries but are yet to confirm. There is an opportunity to advertise the free pitches more actively.</p> <p>I have also met with Annamaria Cast, the Enterprise Officer at NNC to explore how we can attract additional stalls. She has agreed to visit markets in neighbouring towns from October to highlight the availability of free pitches in Raunds.</p>

Appendix 2

Summary	
To receive an update on the Council's current position regarding the library.	
Attachments	
None	
Report	
1.0	<p>Background</p> <p>The re-structuring of the library service by Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) has been well documented. The process is effectively summarised in the minutes of the Full Council meeting September 2020 (appendix 5).</p> <p>In September 2020 Raunds Town Council (RTC) paused negotiations around the lease and transfer of the library building for a period of 6 months, so that the matter could be considered when a sustained relaxation in Covid restrictions had been demonstrated. This was to ensure that Raunds taxpayers did not pay the lease cost of a building that could not be occupied. Sadly, we are all too well aware that the pandemic worsened over the winter with sustained lockdowns and restrictions in place well into the spring and early summer.</p> <p>NCC subsequently allowed Raunds Community Library Trust (RCLT) to operate the building on the basis of a tenancy at will agreement at no additional cost to Raunds tax payers. However, this is not a permanent solution and it is recognised that this arrangement does not give RCLT security of tenure, nor does it achieve NCC's objective of Raunds Library becoming a community run library.</p> <p>North Northamptonshire Council</p> <p>The vesting day for North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) was 1st April 2021. NNC along with all the district and borough councils in the area were abolished at the same time. Both RTC and RCLT were mindful that the move to a unitary council might bring about a change in policy with regards to libraries. It was hoped that the new unitary authority may take a different view on the transfer of library buildings to community groups. However, both North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council have been clear, that in order to be fair to all groups involved in the process and, in line with the outcome of previous legal challenges to the process there will be no change in policy. Assets will not be transferred at a nil consideration and there will be no review of the "tier" that each library falls within.</p> <p>Community Ownership Fund</p> <p>In March 2021 the Government announced the launch of the Community Ownership Fund. This allowed community groups to bid for up to £250,000 of matched funding to support the purchase and renovation of community assets that would otherwise close or be lost to the community. Projects benefitting from the fund would then be run as community-owned businesses. At a meeting of the Town Council in March 2021, Mr Peter Wathen, Chairman of RCLT asked the Town Council to consider the fund.</p> <p>RCLT asked NNC to investigate how this funding might enable the purchase of the library building through the Trust or Town Council.</p> <p>The full prospectus for the funding was not launched until July 2021 and following detailed analysis of the fund by the legal team at NNC it has been found that Raunds Library is not a suitable project for the fund.</p> <p>It is worth noting that guidance for the fund states that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Parish/Town Councils cannot apply 2) The fund is not open for the purchase of assets that are already publicly owned. <p>The outcome above was communicated to RTC and RCLT in a letter from NNC on 25 August 2021. In the interim it has been disappointing to see literature circulating criticising the delay when RTC were investigating a scheme at the request of RCLT which had the potential to save considerable public funds.</p>

Raunds Community Library Trust Business Plan

In June 2020 RCLT were asked to provide a revised business plan to reflect how Coronavirus had affected financial planning and the range of services offered.

At the time RCLT submitted a summary document as shown in the minutes of [Full Council July 2020](#) Obviously the length of the pandemic was unknown to everyone, and the Library Trust could only submit a plan based on unknowns.

Now that we are in the post Covid recovery phase the business plan needs to be reviewed in more detail.

The plan has been reviewed by the new town clerk and the following observations are made which need to be addressed:

- There is no breakdown of income or reference to exploring commercial opportunities.
- The plan does not demonstrate how RCLT would become financially self-sufficient in the future.
- The business plan was written for NCC to demonstrate the group's ability to deliver a library service, but it is not a suitable plan to be considered by financiers (i.e., the Town Council)
- The plan does not demonstrate succession planning or how new trustees will be brought into the trust. The trustees were all appointed in August 2019 so have already served 2 years.
- It is noted that the trustees provided [accounts and a report](#) to the Charity Commission in April 2021. It would have been useful for these to have been supplied to the Town Council.
- It would be useful for the business plan to detail how the library intends to "future proof" its services. How will the library adapt for digital delivery and maintain footfall to the library?
- The Town Council will need a service level agreement with RCLT to support the funding, this agreement may include additional requirements such as increased opening hours over and above the minimum originally set by NCC and consideration of this needs to be reflected in the business plan.

2.0

Other considerations

The pandemic has had significant impact on commercial property prices, and this should be reflected in the cost of lease / purchase. RCTL and the volunteers should be commended for the work they do to keep the library open.

3.0

Recommendations

- a) **That the Clerk meets with RCLT to offer advice and guidance to enable them to produce a revised business plan, including the latest visitor statistics and other pertinent information.**
- b) **That the Clerk opens a dialogue with NNC regarding the property.**
- c) **That RTC re-confirm their commitment to providing library services for Raunds.**