

STAMFORD TOWN COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRA ORDINARY STAMFORD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT STAMFORD TOWN HALL
ON TUESDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2022 AT 6.00PM**

PRESENT Councillor Mrs G Johnson, Chairman (Town Mayor)
Councillor H Bisnauthsing
Councillor B Sandall
Councillor Mrs S J Sandall
Councillor J Dawson
Councillor Mrs S Sismore
Councillor A Croft
Councillor S Carroll
Councillor D Dorson
Councillor Mrs M Pitt
Councillor Mrs A Carter-Begbie
Councillor S Fenn
Councillor Mrs L Brewin
Councillor Mrs A Schonhut

ALSO PRESENT Town Clerk
Councillor Mrs A Wheeler (attended virtually)
Councillor K Cooke, Leader of South Kesteven District Council
1 Member of Press

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None

Formal meeting commenced 6.00pm

564. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Point 1)

Councillor Miss B Griffin, Councillor D Taylor, Councillor Mrs E Hooper, Councillor Mrs A Wheeler, Councillor S Ford and Councillor J Winterbourne submitted their reasons for absence.

Proposal 1 - Councillor A Croft proposed and seconded by Councillor D Dorson, and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Council accepted the reasons for absence.

565. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (Agenda Point 2) None declared.

566. To Consider Asset Transfers and the bid for Stamford Bastion (Point 3)

The Chairman Councillor G Johnson welcomed all those who were able to attend this emergency meeting. It was noted all members had been circulated with the Town Clerk's report.

- i. ***UFFINGTON AND EMPINGHAM PLAYING FIELDS*** – Negotiations are underway for the Uffington and Empingham playing fields to be transferred to the Town Council in 2023. However, it must be established that the proposal of the Empingham Playing Field transfer will also include the Bridge Club and Town Band facilities.
- ii. ***RED LION SQUARE TOILETS*** – As the Town Council is aware, a visit with the SKDC Asset Manager had been conducted to the Red Lion Square toilets. The extent of the building was surprising, which was internally in very poor condition but had a secure roof. At present the main accommodation could only be safely accessed via the adjoining Nelson Butchers unit. However, this could be rectified with the restoration of the upper

floors and the basement. Roughly estimated restoration costs were anticipated at some £500K, which could be phased. SKDC is considering transferring the Freehold of this Community Asset to the Town Council for one Pound (£1.00). But if not accepted by the Town Council, SKDC is willing to continue the management of the facility. Should the Town Council accept the offer it was recommended that the cleaning regime should be outsourced.

- iii. **BASTION, WEST STREET** - It was noted that SKDC is considering selling this historic, Grade 1 listed, scheduled monument, with its adjacent storage area known as Bonney's Paddock which is potentially of significant archaeological interest. It was recognised that this property had been transferred FOC as part of the assets of Stamford Borough Council to the District Council in 1974, when the District Council (SKDC) was formed, and Stamford Town Council lost its Borough status. When discussed at the recent Finance Committee meeting, there was unanimous concern over the sale of such an important component of Stamford's rich heritage and history. It was understood that offers would be considered by SKDC in excess of £50,000.00 with a deadline for bids by 24 February 2022, now extended to 10 March 2022. It was also believed that this location has a strong link to St. Leonards Priory which should be transferred simultaneously with the Bastion.

During debate it was recognised that several assets had been transferred in 1974, at no cost to SKDC, as part of the Government reorganisation in 1974. Councillors considered therefore it was incumbent upon the District Council at least to consult on such assets with the Town Council should they wish to consider their disposal or sale.

In respect of Red Lion Square toilets, Councillor B Sandall confirmed that the only access to the rooms above the toilets and into the cellars below is via the butchers next door. A new access would need to be created to secure a safe and sole access.

It had been advised that the annual costs of management of the facilities is £39K. Should it be agreed by the Town Council to accept the management of these public conveniences, it would be expected that SKDC would assign the appropriate sum that has been collected by them through their Precept to support the Town Council's take-over.

Councillor J Dawson believed that the Bastion was part of the Borough Council assets in 1616. It was hoped that an agreement could be struck to return the Bastion to the Town Council in conjunction with the transfer of the Red Lion Square toilets and St Leonard's Priory.

Councillor K Cooke confirmed that during a period before his election to SKDC, extensive work had been undertaken to the public conveniences and it had been investigated whether it was viable to convert the upper floor into flats. However, the costs were deemed prohibitive. If the Town Council wishes to pursue the transfer of the Red Lion Square toilets, then dialogue may continue with an arrangement to be reached in respect of a movement of appropriate funds. Should the Council decide not to take on these facilities then the District Council would continue their management. In respect of St. Leonard's Priory, this is Leased to the District Council by Burghley Estates. Should the Town Council be happy to take on the lease, arrangements could be made for its transfer.

Councillor Cook recognised that the Bastion is within a prominent light industrial location and the District Council had been approached by a group of develop it into a community asset. There is a genuine need to ensure that any transfer of ownership is to a party who will respect the importance of this site. SKDC is not bound to accept the highest bid and invites bidders to advise on their proposed use for the site and any factors which mean that their bid should be given greater weight. The Town Council should

submit a bid before the 12 March when it will be evaluated to ensure that it is retained as a community asset.

It was clear that there are interested parties who wish to submit a bid in order to retain the Bastion as a community asset. All such individuals should be aware of the legal responsibilities and requirements placed upon an owner taking on a Scheduled Monument. The Town Clerk advised this information has been obtained from Historic England and available to view. Some Councillors expressed concern over taking on such a significant responsibility which would fall on the taxpayer. Other Councillors appreciated that there would be a cost attached to retaining this monument for Stamford, but it held significant historical interest for the town. Grants are available for maintaining such important structures.

Councillor S Doyle recognised that submitting a collective bid for the Bastion, with the best of intentions is too complex, and individual bids would mean that parties would be bidding against each other. He also requested that the bid for the Bastion incorporates the consideration for the Red Lion Square toilet.

Proposal 2 – It was proposed by Councillor S Carroll, seconded by Councillor J Dawson and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Council submits a bid for a £1.00 in respect of the Bastion and that the bid should be presented to the District Council confirming that the Bastion would be protected and held in perpetuity as a community asset.

In respect of the Red Lion Square public conveniences, Councillor Mrs S J Sandall informed the Council that the budgets had been calculated for 2022/2023. So, if the Town Council took it on during the coming financial year a consideration should be made by SKDC to assist the Town Council during this coming financial year. Councillor D Dorson stated that the Town Council has proved that it can manage such facilities effectively and efficiently.

It was also considered that in the coming financial year nothing more than managing the facility is essential, due to the complaints received in respect of the condition of the facility. The Town Council recognised that these facilities require a cleaner stationed on site to ensure that the conveniences are properly tended. It should also be understood that the District Council has no duty to provide toilet facilities for towns.

Proposal 3 – It was proposed by Councillor B Sandall, seconded by Councillor D Dorson and **RESOLVED** by majority vote that the Town Council has an ambition to take on the freehold and management of the Red Lion Toilets subject to an investigation in respect of the contribution to support the Town Council manage the facility in the coming financial year. There was one Abstention.

Chairman
(The meeting closed at 6.45p.m.)