

Morpeth Town Council
Minutes of the Full Council Committee Meeting
Wednesday 27th November 2019
at 6:30pm in the Corn Exchange of Morpeth Town Council

<u>Present:</u>	Councillors: A Byard	- Mayor
	D Bawn	
	N Bawn	
	N Best	
	L Cassie	
	D Herne (arriving at 6:33pm)	
	K Holmes	
	R Hogg	
	J Parreira	
	A Tebbutt	
	J Wearmouth	
	R Wearmouth	
	Clerks: Mrs T Bell	- Town Clerk
	Miss K Carter	- Democratic Services Assistant
	Miss C Rowell	- Administrative Assistant
Absent Councillors:	Councillor J Tebbutt	- Apologies Received (Illness)
	Councillor J Gebhard	- Apologies Received (Business)
	Councillor R Thompson	- No Apologies Received

23 members of the public were also in attendance.

Open Session

Cllr Byard provided the members of the public with a brief overview of the history of the site at Storey Park community centre and future plans to increase the provision of community space in Morpeth.

Jack Freeman addressed members regarding his concerns as secretary of the football team who play at Storey Park. He is concerned about the loss of facilities.

Cllr Holmes left the meeting at 6:36pm

Cllr Kate Holmes addressed members to raise concerns that figures acquired from Northumberland County Council (NCC) for refurbishments had not been scrutinised thoroughly enough and quotes had not been obtained for a like for like rebuild of the centre.

Gary Featherstone advised members that himself and Cllr Holmes had visited the centre during adverse weather while another group were using the hall and could not see any visible signs of wear to the building. He asked if Councillors would allow a survey to be carried out on the building and if another public meeting be organised to discuss options.

Charles Sellers, CEO of Innovation and Technology Group, asked that the business community in Morpeth have the opportunity to help and contribute towards the refurbishments of Storey Park and implored the Town Council to delay the demolition of the building.

Cllr Holmes addressed the council with a letter from Mr Joe Nugent. In his letter Mr Nugent informed members that he had attended a Finance & General Purposes committee meeting on the 6th November 2019 to ask for another public meeting to discuss Storey Park. He has since submitted a Freedom of Information request to the Town Council for information regarding the surveys carried out on the site and is awaiting the findings. He invites all members of the public and all Councillors to attend a public meeting at Storey Park on Monday 9th December 2019.

Deborah Walden enquired why the building had not been looked after?

John Best enquired where the covenant for repairs and maintenance lies in the lease between Morpeth Town Council and NCC?

Christie Scott, a resident of Stobhill and volunteer at Stobhill Boys Club, suggested that what had been done at Stobhill community centre could be done at Storey Park and was willing to work with others to save the centre.

Sylvia Lucas informed members that there had always been a footprint for a hut/building and that the footballers needed a place to go.

Paula Cromar raised concerns that facilities for children were decreasing and she believes that the new facilities at Goosehill First School will not be adequate enough.

Cllr Byard thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting and asked Cllr D Bawn to respond.

Cllr Bawn advised the members of the public that Morpeth Town Council currently have a lease with NCC for Storey Park and St James community centres. The repairing covenant belongs to NCC, however, NCC have not adequately maintained the building over a long period of time and as a result it has fallen into a state of disrepair. He advised that the Town Council first raised concerns with NCC in 2013 regarding the poor state of the building. In 2014 a survey was commissioned and it was found that essential works just to bring the building up to standard would cost

approximately £250,000, to address all elements this would cost approximately £500,000. Morpeth Town Council commissioned a survey in September 2014 and concerns were raised regarding the undulation of the concrete floor and the sulphur content of the hard core. In 2015 a number of discussions took place to decide what action to take, however these efforts were frustrated at the continual change of administration at NCC. In January 2017 NCC commissioned a report by an independent Quantity Surveyor. The report stated that basic essential works to be carried out to bring it up to standard would cost £234,554 plus VAT, a basic essential works with replacement of services would cost £423,875 plus VAT. A comprehensive building repair would cost £608,683.30 plus VAT. A comprehensive repair with desirable improvements would cost £827,814 plus VAT, and a like for like rebuild would cost £1,287,800 plus VAT.

Cllr Bawn also advised that there had been five public forum consultation events, beginning in 2017, the most recent of which took place on the 5th September 2019. These consultation events articles were published in the newspaper and Inside Morpeth magazine, posted on social media, and fliers were delivered to Morpeth residents.

Options were discussed at Finance & General Purposes committee on the 5th June 2019 and all members unanimously voted for the project to go ahead. At Full Council on the 25th September 2019 it was agreed to move forward with the Community Strategy, which is to upgrade the Pavilion and St James and demolish Storey Park.

Cllr R Wearmouth advised members that there will be an increase in community and sport space due to a new leisure centre, the new first school at Loansdean and the redevelopment of County Hall.

He also informed members that the Town Council had exhausted every avenue to try and find funding to refurbish or rebuild Storey Park. The building currently has a 20% occupancy.

He advised that Storey Park would not be demolished by NCC immediately. He again reiterated the invitation made at the Finance & General Purposes Committee on the 6th November 2019, to any group with a business plan or idea to come forward and talk to the Town Council. To date no group has come forward with a plan.

RESOLVED

(i) Information duly noted.

Cllr Herne arrived at 6:33pm

Cllr Holmes left the meeting at 6:36pm

23 members of the public left the meeting at 7:13pm.

172/19 **Mayoral Announcements**

- The 1920's themed Mayor's Ball will take place on Saturday 14th December 2019.

173/19 **Mayoral Diary**

Members were provided with the schedule of events to be attended by the Mayor/Deputy Mayor from November 2019 to May 2020.

RESOLVED

- (i) Information duly noted.

174/19 **Declarations of Interest**

The Chairman received no declarations of interest on this occasion:

175/19 **Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 25th September 2019**

The minutes of the above meeting was approved as a true record.

RESOLVED

- (i) Information duly noted.
- (ii) That the Minutes of 25th September 2019, a copy of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved, and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

176/19 **Matters Arising from Full Council Committee Meeting on 25th September 2019**

There were no matters arising on this occasion.

177/19 **Items Referred from Other Committees and Working Groups**

There are no items on this occasion

RESOLVED

- (i) Information duly noted.

178/19 **Community Buildings Grant Agreement**

Members were asked to approve the sealing of the grant agreement between Morpeth Town Council and Northumberland County Council.

A vote was taken: 11 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstention

Cllr Cassie enquired why the demolition of Storey Park was not carried out under NCC's ownership rather than the Town Council. The Clerk advised that Storey Park would be used temporarily while St James is refurbished. It would then be demolished once the works have finished.

Cllr Best advised members that once the Council had ownership of the site groups could still enter into a partnership to use and manage the site.

Cllr D Bawn proposed that the Council should advertise on the Town Council website that members are happy to work with the community to try and find a solution.

Cllr Best proposed that a position statement is drawn up by the Clerk and Mayor, and representatives attend the community meeting at Storey Park on the 9th December 2019 to reiterate that position. Cllrs A Tebbutt and R Wearmouth will attend the meeting.

RESOLVED

- (i) Information duly noted.
- (ii) That the Grant Agreement be sealed and returned to NCC.
- (iii) The Clerk and Mayor to develop a position statement.

179/19 **Representatives on Outside Bodies**

Members were provided for information with the Outside Organisation reports.

RESOLVED

- (i) Information duly noted.

180/19 **Strategic County Councillor Updates**

No updates were submitted on this occasion.

Cllr Bawn informed members that the works on Ladies Walk are due to be completed by Thursday 28th November 2019. Works on Lesley's View have been put on hold as a resident has a claim on the land where the path needs to be made safe. The road on Cottingwood Lane has been temporarily patched and will be permanently fixed in the new year.

RESOLVED

(i) Information duly noted.

181/19 **Local Council Issues**

There were no issues for Local Council raised on this occasion.

RESOLVED

(i) Information duly noted.

The meeting concluded at 7:47pm with Councillors A Byard, D Bawn, N Bawn, N Best, L Cassie, D Herne, R Hogg, J Parreira, A Tebbutt, J Wearmouth and R Wearmouth.