

MINUTES OF THE CIVIC COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 11 AUGUST 2015

PRESENT

The Mayor – Councillor Baddeley
The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Salt
Councillor Davies
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jones
Councillor Lawson
Councillor McGuinness
Councillor Redfern
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Swift
Councillor Whilding

16.15. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Lovatt
Councillor Sheldon MBE
Councillor Wood
Town Crier

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: none were declared.
- b Other Interests: Re Minute 19 - Councillor Salt as a member of the Royal British Legion.

18. MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Civic Committee held on 14 July 2015.

19. WAR MEMORIAL PUBLIC REALM WORKS

The Chair invited Elaine Rice and Sandra from British Legion to contribute to the meeting and welcomed Beverley Poole and her colleague, Oliver.

Ms Poole spoke on the minor amendments made to the scheme. Councillor Salt said that she had been contacted by local residents about the café idea. They had expressed concern over noise during the evenings. Ms Poole said that a licence would control what type of activity was permitted and the hours.

Councillor Jones questioned why the Council was doing this? He felt that the War Memorial area was not a social space and said that he could not support this. He was not in favour of extending commercial space.

The Chair said that there had been a consensus at the last meeting and that seating would only be for the daytime for the café. Councillor Baddeley repeated her statement from the last meeting, saying that she supported Councillor Jones' view. Councillor Lawson expressed concern that the chairs would be used by take-away customers during the evening.

Councillor Rushton asked whose tables they would be and Ms Poole replied that they would be owned by the restaurant and they would be responsible.

Councillor Hall said that, as this site currently is, it is not good enough for this important entrance to our town. The point of this scheme was to improve the entrance to town and the poor environment around the Monument. Whether there is a café is immaterial – it is up to Licensing to decide.

Councillor Hart agreed with Councillor Hall that idea was a concept and we should try to improve this space. More discussion was needed, particularly moving the post box. It was time we did something and he felt there were some good proposals here.

Mrs Rice was asked for her thoughts and she pointed out that benches at this location had vandalised. She would like a few chairs however, for older people, and was happy with the planting area. The present railings around the Memorial were unstable and needed removing. A discussion on the Remembrance Sunday operation would need to be held and she suggested a friendlier surface than cobbles – possibly flatter paving. This was noted.

The Chair said that there were two issues here i) the improvement of the whole of area and ii) the issue of the tables

Councillor Lawson proposed leaving the tables question until the scheme was completed.

Councillor Baddeley proposes no tables be sited outside and Councillor Jones seconded this proposal. A vote was taken: 5 for the Motion: 3 against the Motion and 4 abstentions. The proposal was Carried.

Councillor Salt pointed out that there was a café at the National Memorial Arboretum which was sympathetic and she felt that seating could be tasteful.

Councillor Hart said that the District Council planting scheme was not good and this was why he would like to get rid of this planter. Councillor Rogers thought the area could look bland area when tables were not out. Councillor Swift pointed out that whether we like it or not, the café is sited next to the Monument. Councillor Lawson said that there were two stone lions stored at Biddulph Timber – could these be used here?

Ms Poole suggested having a design within the paving, similar to Rome.

The Chair then asked the RBL members how they would like to see the space. Mrs Rice said with a raised bed for the less mobile to plant crosses in and a larger paved area would be useful.

Councillor Hall said that the paved area itself would give a less cluttered view of the Memorial. He felt that the scheme needed to be kept simple. The Chair said that he was generally happy with the layout as shown. In summary, members were not happy about the seating but all else was approved.

Councillor Hart proposed that this Motion be approved, seconded by Councillor Lawson. A vote was taken: 8 for, 3 against, 1 abstention. The Motion was Carried.

Councillor Hall added that the Council could ask the District Council to designate this area as the War Memorial space and prevent future commercial use.

Ms Poole and Oliver and Mrs Rice and Sandra were thanked for their input to the meeting and left the Chamber.

20. KISSING GATES & RAILINGS PROJECT

Update by the Chair to say that the land owners were not prepared to seek additional funding. Councillor Hart proposed that we proceed as per Minute 12.15, using funding from the Projects budget. This was seconded by Councillor Rushton, a vote was taken and all were in favour.

21. TOWN HALL IMPROVEMENT WORK

The Chair talked members through the plans to redesign the building to provide better accommodation for the Police. Councillor Hart commented that we have no choice in this as we could lose the Town Hall otherwise, so he supported this proposal. This was Seconded by Councillor Jones, saying that he did not like the plans much, but that there did not seem to be another option. He felt that this work would take away some of imposing nature of the frontage.

Comments were made about the need for good access to the stairs at all times, plus the need for space for ticket selling by the Hall doors. These comments will be passed on. All were in favour of the proposals and Councillor Redfern commented that he was pleased to see proposals for an enhanced police area at last.

22. SHOPPERS SURVEY

This was deferred until the next meeting, at the request of Councillor Salt.

23. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- a) The Chair reported that the Artisan Market group had held a brief meeting to discuss enhancing the market by different themes. It had been decided that the next market would incorporate a car boot sale, but that subsequently there would be a rotation of themes – antiques, gardens and books. This was approved.
- b) The Chair had been trying to pursue the comment made at full Council about the new steps, but had received no response from the District Council as yet.
- c) Better signage in the town centre had been raised previously - finger posts were needed. It was Moved to look into this for the next meeting; Proposed by Councillor Hall, seconded by Councillor Hart. All were in favour.

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm.

Signed Date