

CIRENCESTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Meeting of Council held in Cotswold District Council's Chamber, Trinity Road, Cirencester, at 7.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 10th January 2006.

PRESENT: Councillor N E Whereat – Mayor
Councillor Dr P A Hedges – Deputy Mayor

Councillors: G T Adams
Mrs S A Alexander
R Bourne
Mrs M T Eccles
B D Hudson
Mrs S A le Noury
J B Leicester
Mrs R A Leicester
R G Lock
D J Nash

Andrew Rennie Crook - Town Clerk
Clive Sherwood – Deputy Town Clerk
Johan Newman – Personal Assistant

A Prayer was read by the Mayor.

98.06 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors J D Leigh, Mrs B A Potter and Mrs M S Rickman.

99.06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs S A Alexander declared a personal interest as she is a Member of the Corn Hall Joint Management Committee representing Cotswold District Council (Minute No. 110.06).

Councillors G T Adams, B D Hudson and J B Leicester declared a personal interest with regard to the survey carried out on the Norman Arch by the Cirencester Civic Society, as they are members of the Cirencester Civic Society (Minute No. 108.06).

Councillor Mrs S A Alexander declared a personal interest with regard to the tenancy of the Norman Arch, as she knows the tenant's mother (Minute No. C117.06).

100.06 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Tuesday, 11th October 2005 and the Special Council Meeting held on 6th December 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor subject to Minute Nos. C77.06 to C79.06 and C97.06 to be considered under confidential matters.

101.6 FINANCE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 6th December 2005 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman of the Finance Committee at its next meeting.

102.06 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor reported that he had attended Cirencester Infants School to see the children's Nativity Play, which was an honour and a joy to see the wonderful knowledge and efforts of the children and teachers.

The Mayor also reported that he had attended a carol service at Cirencester Hospital and thanked the Deputy Mayor for attending the Hospital and nursing homes on Christmas Day.

103.06 QUESTION TIME FOR ELECTORS

No questions were received.

104.06 QUESTION TIME FOR MEMBERS

No questions were received.

105.06 RESOLUTIONS MOVED ON NOTICE – STANDING ORDER NO. 19

None were received.

106.06 GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

No questions were asked of this authority.

107.06 COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

No questions were asked of this authority.

108.06 NORMAN ARCH

The Clerk stated that the principal report would be given by Councillor Dr P A Hedges and gave a brief summary of events. He reported that the decision was made in January 2005 to market the property. This decision was reaffirmed in June 2005 and in the interim an action group was formed, with a petition being presented, identifying opposition to the sale. In August 2005, it was resolved by Council that a joint working group be set up and in October 2005 more time was given to the group to consider "... a viable alternative" and to report to Council at its meeting on 10th January 2006.

The Clerk reported that he had been advised by the agents that they had sent out 120 sets of details, emailed approximately 60 e-brochures, 16 people had viewed the property and two offers had been received. The cost to-date had been identified at £828.00.

The Clerk also reported that he had had meetings with representatives of Gloucestershire County Council regarding the right of way, the last one being on 13th December 2005 and he had been advised that the footpath could be designated but would require justification "that the right of way would be under threat". If the Council did decide to sell, the situation could be secured by way of covenant.

Members received a report from Councillor Dr P A Hedges, Chairman of the Working Group with representatives of the Norman Arch Group (a copy of which is appended to the signed Minutes).

Councillor Dr Hedges outlined his report and identified the options for the future of the Norman Arch, namely: -

Option A – Open Market Sale

Option B – Commercial/Residential Lease

Option C – “Heritage” Lease

Option D – Public Ownership (by the Cirencester Town Council)

And the “Conclusions and Recommendations” as follows: -

“The Working Group has concluded the following: -

1. There are a number of emerging alternative options to sale. However, further time and resource is required to explore these options fully.
2. The survey commissioned by the Civic Society has indicated that the building may be of even greater historical, scientific and architectural interest than has previously been appreciated.
3. The emerging options all have different timescales to become viable. A project plan will need to be developed to explore these options fully in a timely manner.”

The Clerk stated that there were restrictions on the obtaining of grants by local authorities. Criteria would obviously need to be satisfied and this was a very long and difficult process, with no guarantee of success. He did, however, advise that it might be looked on more favourably if the Council was in partnership with another organisation.

Members were informed that a survey had been undertaken on the property, which had been commissioned, without authority, by the Cirencester Civic Society.

Councillors G T Adams, B D Hudson and J B Leicester declared an interest with regard to the survey carried out on the Norman Arch by the Cirencester Civic Society, as they are members of the Cirencester Civic Society.

It was noted by Members that £67,000 had been identified in the Civic Society survey for general maintenance and some enhancement over the next three years. Members accordingly took this into account when considering the precept for 2006/7. The Deputy Clerk advised Members that there would be £15,000 “earmarked” in the Reserves for the Norman Arch at the end of the financial year. A suggestion was therefore made that £18,000 should be allocated in 2006/7 and £17,000 for the following two years.

The Clerk stated that if the Members decide to defer the decision to July, the resolution made on 11th October 2005, namely “**RESOLVED that it would be unfair for the Council to consider any offers for the Norman Arch whilst the Working Group is seeking to present a positive alternative to the scheme. This proposal is subject to a viable alternative being identified and reported to Council at its meeting on 10th January 2006.**”, would need to be rescinded during the suspension of Standing Orders.

It was RESOLVED that Standing Orders be suspended. Council then RESOLVED that the resolution made on 11th October 2005 (Minute No. 70.06) be rescinded.

A Member called for a recorded vote, which was taken as follows: -

FOR

G T Adams
Mrs S A Alexander
Mrs M T Eccles
Dr P A Hedges
B D Hudson
Mrs S A le Noury
J B Leicester
Mrs R A Leicester
R G Lock
D J Nash
N E Whereat

AGAINST

R Bourne

Council RESOLVED that Standing Orders be restored.

It was then RESOLVED that: -

- a) **the Council defer the decision to sell the Norman Arch until 10th July 2006 to allow the Norman Arch Working Group to seek further clarification on the issues identified in recommendations 1 – 3 of its report and withdraws the same from the market;**
- b) **the Council makes prudent financial provision for the identified liabilities in determining its Estimates for 2006/7;**
- c) **the Council extends the lifetime of the Working Group until 10th July 2006.**

109.06 PLAY AREA AT "THE PADDOCK", QUEEN ELIZABETH ROAD, CIRENCESTER

Members received a report from the Deputy Clerk regarding the request from Cotswold District Council that the Town Council take over the above (a copy of which is appended to the signed Minutes).

The Deputy Clerk outlined his report and recommended that as the play area does not meet the required standards, the request from Cotswold District Council should be turned down.

RESOLVED that: -

- a) **the report be noted;**
- b) **the Council does not take over the play area known as "The Paddock" at Queen Elizabeth Road, Cirencester.**

110.06 ESTIMATES 2006/7

Members received a copy of the Draft Estimates (totalling £515,400) together with a list of the itemised changes.

The Clerk drew Members' attention to the letter circulated around the table from Cotswold District Councillor Lyndon Stowe, dated 22nd December 2005, regarding the Corn Hall.

Councillor Mrs S A Alexander declared a personal interest as a Member of the Corn Hall Joint Management Committee representing Cotswold District Council and as a member of the panel that is reviewing the Visitor Information Centre.

A Member suggested that the subsidy to the Corn Hall should be withdrawn due to the substantial funds given to the same over the last decade and that support should be given to the Visitor Information Centre, located in the Corn Hall, instead.

The Deputy Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer advised that there would be £15,000 "earmarked" in the Reserves at the end of the financial year for the Norman Arch.

He also advised that he had been unable to obtain costs for the re-surfacing works in the Abbey Grounds. He accordingly recommended that the £6,000 identified in the figures should remain and that any additional cost could be borne from another heading such as the Environmental budget.

The Deputy Clerk also stated that he would not advise allocating funds to the Visitor Information Centre without consideration of the financial position.

RESOLVED that: -

- a) **the following additions/amendments be made: -**
 - **Norman Arch £18,000 (in accordance with Minute No. 108.06b)**
 - **Cotswold District Council (Corn Hall/Visitor Information Centre) £5,000**
- b) **the precept be set at £528,400 for the year 2006/7.**

111.06 PROJECT BOARD

Members received a report from Councillor D J Nash, Chairman of the Project Board, regarding the meetings held on 17th October and 14th November 2005 (a copy of which is appended to the signed Minutes).

The Clerk reported that with regard to the sustainable lighting at the Kingshill Lane Sports Development Site, he had spoken with representatives of Gloucestershire County Council and was keeping pressure on the suppliers of the lighting. He hoped to progress the lighting in the near future.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

112.06 REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER BODIES

Councillor Dr P A Hedges, Deputy Mayor, reported that he had visited the Hospital and several of the nursing homes on Christmas Day and it had been a pleasure to do so.

Councillor D J Nash reported on the Cotswold Council for Voluntary Service and stated that the situation was less bleak than previously identified and that the organisation was in negotiation with the Gloucestershire Ambulance Trust with regard to passenger transport.

Councillor R Bourne reported on his concern with regard to the Cirencester Open Air Swimming Pool Association and the receipt of the Minutes of their meeting but not agendas so he had been unable to attend. He accordingly requested a meeting with the Town Clerk and the Mayor, as he believed that the situation was unsatisfactory.

113.06 MATTERS IDENTIFIED FOR CONSIDERATION AT FUTURE MEETINGS

Councillor Mrs M T Eccles requested that an item on the skateboarding facility at the Kingshill Lane Sports Development Site be identified at the next meeting of Council.

114.6 EMERGENCY ITEM – CIRENCESTER OPEN AIR SWIMMING POOL LEASE

The Clerk sought the Members' retrospective ratification of the granting of a seven-year lease to the Cirencester Open Air Swimming Pool Association from 3rd January 2006 on a peppercorn rent.

RESOLVED that the Council's approval be given for the retrospective signing of a seven year lease to Cirencester Open Air Swimming Pool Association.

PART TWO
CONFIDENTIAL

- C115.06 MINUTES**
- C116.06 KINGSHILL LANE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT SITE**
- C117.06 NORMAN ARCH**

See Confidential Minute Book.

RESOLVED that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest, that the public and press be excluded and they were instructed to withdraw.

The meeting closed at 9.55 p.m.

Councillor N E Whereat
Mayor