**REPORT OF THE TOWN MEETING FOR THE TOWNSHIP OF KNARESBOROUGH HELD AT KNARESBOROUGH HOUSE, KNARESBOROUGH, MONDAY 9 MARCH 2020 AT 7:30PM**

**PRESENT:** The Town Mayor (Councillor C Willoughby) in the Chair

**Town Councillors:** M Clemmitt,E Darling, J Gair, D Goode, H Gostlow, T Hunter, P Ireland,

A Willoughby and A Wright

**County Councillors:** Zoe Metcalfe

**Present:** Miss A Pulman (Clerk) and Mrs M Richards\* (Deputy Clerk)

A Garraway, H Wright, I Wright, A Grinter, P Godsell, M Woodward,

D Houlgate.

\*denotes lives outside of Knaresborough and not entitled to ask questions or vote on any matters.

**577** **Item 1 – To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting**

 Apologies were received from Councillors S Mearns and M Wood

**578 Item 2 – To consider and, if thought fit, approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 4 March 2019**

 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Monday 4 March 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

**Matters Arising**: None for this meeting

**579 Item 3 – To receive the report of the Town Mayor regarding the Town Council’s work over**

**the past year**

The Mayor welcomed all present and explained that all working group Chairs would be giving an update on their work to date but that she would be giving an update on the Knaresborough Development Plan, which has been worked on for at least five years and is slowly moving to its hopeful adoption and implementation.

She went on to explain that the revised version of Knaresborough’s Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) was submitted to Harrogate Borough Council (HBC) in summer 2019. HBC then reviewed the document and submitted a comprehensive list of concerns, issues and suggested changes to the document. Two themes ran through their comments, firstly the need to better align the document with the latest version of the Harrogate Local Plan and secondly the need to improve the evidence provided in the sections on Economy and Business and Housing Policy. This work has necessitated a further review of the NDP, which has not yet been completed. The evidence for Economy and Business and Housing sections has been re-written. This has caused some minor wording changes, but the policy intentions remain the same. We are now in discussion with HBC to move to the next stage when they will run a further public consultation on the updated NDP and associated documents in 2020.

**Town Team Working Group:**

Councillor Hannah Gostlow spoke about the town team working group and explained the remit of the group. She explained that the group had looked into town centre tours and had worked in conjunction with visitors to Nidd Hall Hotel. Feedback comments had been very positive and the tours are now being arranged as a weekly offering to Nidd Hall Hotel.

She spoke about the re-design of the town council logo. Following liaison with a local graphic designer town council now has a new logo which is suitable for print and there are versions suitable for use within social media.

She explained that a Visitor Survey is planned for visitors who are staying overnight in the town. Results of the survey would provide the group, and indeed other groups, with ideas for future projects.

She mentioned continued lobbying of North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) on issues such as making the roads and paths around Knaresborough safer for pedestrians.

**Town Centre Economy Group:**

Councillor Andy Wright as Chair explained that group had been set up for the first time this year and members had been looking into the number of empty shops in the town, together with issues such as the loss of the banks etc. He mentioned that members had been looking at access into the town and at parking/parking meters etc. He mentioned that he would welcome any suggestions that can be taken forward relating to getting the town economy moving.

 **Castle Working Group:**

The Mayor, Councillor Christine Willoughby, spoke about how the working group continues to promote the castle. The second phase of the castle flood lights is currently being installed and should be completed within the next week. This phase will see the Tudor courthouse, the prison and the trees between the King’s tower and the war memorial lit up. The scheme has been jointly funded by HBC and the town council. A second project, hopefully to be completed soon, is to provide three flags on flagpoles between the car park and the hedge. It is hoped the flags will attract the attention of visitors in Castlegate and by the police station.

Replacement Interpretation boards are hoped to be in place very soon as well as a board installed to explain the floodlighting scheme at the castle and encourage return visits to see the different phases of the lights.

The working group continues to discuss maintenance of the castle and moat and continues to lobby HBC in this regard. HBC officers have now agreed to commence discussions with The Duchy of Lancaster to negotiate the renewal of lease of the castle.

The group continues to liaise with other groups which are working for the good of the town including Renaissance Knaresborough and Chamber of Trade. The group is also working with the Forest 250 working group to promote the Forest of Knaresborough.

The group is made up of members from the Civic Society, councillors, ex councillors and other interested individuals. The Chair stated that the group is always interested in further members; the only criterion to join is to be passionate about the castle.

 **Conyngham Hall Working Group**

Councillor Hannah Gostlow explained that the group had been set up in response to proposed changes being implemented by HBC. Parkrun had been started in May 2019 and continues to attract an average of 152 runners per week, with the biggest attendance being 460 on New Year’s Day.

Last Summer saw the installation of the Questr Code Exercise Trail funded by the Rotary Club of Knaresborough.

In the last year the group has produced an illustrated map of the Conyngham Hall grounds. A copy had been given to every primary school aged child in Knaresborough and distributed through local shops and cafes and tourist information centres.

Future plans include an apothecary’s garden, a tree trail and a children’s play area.

 **Performance Pavilion Working Group:**

Councillor Andrew Willoughby informed the meeting that, after 20 years all permissions are now in place to build a pavilion, which has been designed to suit English Heritage etc. However, he confirmed that, at this stage, support for the project seems to have diminished. He explained that a Justgiving page had been created on the town council website, but no funds had been raised in addition to those which town council has set aside and which are not enough to proceed with the project. He asked that if anyone had any suggestions or ideas in this regard, he would like to hear them.

 **Christmas Committee:**

Councillor Andrew Willoughby explained that all was good with the Christmas Committee and that Bright Friday, organised by Councillor Hannah Gostlow, continues to be a colourful success in the town council calendar. He mentioned that town council is responsible for the town’s Christmas lights and that at present the contract for renewal of supply and installation is out to tender.

**Mayor’s Report on the Council’s work overall:**

The Mayor explained that the town council had seen a busy year which started with council creating a separate planning committee, meeting monthly, to consider council’s response to planning application consultations. During the year the planning committee had considered 131 planning applications.

In addition, the council decided to also move to monthly town council meetings. Members of the public have attended meetings to speak on many and varied topics, from lobbying for improved pedestrian safety at High Bond End and Ripley Road to complaining about the effect on neighbouring properties of the building of the new houses at Manse Farm. Members listen sympathetically and offer council’s opinion on the best way forward, often writing to HBC and NYCC to support the complainant. The Mayor explained that unfortunately, as a Parish Council, Knaresborough’s own powers are limited, but members are always happy to act as a sounding board for any concerns.

She went on to explain that town council had arranged the annual Remembrance celebration and continues to support town organisations with grant funding.

The town council, she continued, has levied a precept of £24.52 based on a Band D property for 2020/21 explaining that £24.52 is per household, per year, and represents a rise of £1.35 on 2019/2020, bringing in the town council an income of £142,730 per annum from council tax payers.

**580 Item 4 – To consider any matters placed before the meeting by the Town Council**

 No items for this meeting

**581 Item 5 – to consider any matters raised by the local government electors present at the meeting**

1. The Mayor read out a pre prepared statement/question from a member of the public asking what can be done to help the town’s economy in support of local shops and businesses. He believes that Knaresborough is an ideal destination for those looking for easy access to outdoor activities, nature and wildlife whilst also being in an ideal location to conduct business. However, he felt that the recent bank and business closures, coupled with council cutbacks and changes in consumer spending, was resulting in Knaresborough’s appeal slipping away and questioned what could be done to stop the slide.

County Councillor David Goode responded explaining that a lot of work is going on in various groups within the town council in trying to address these issues. He confirmed his belief that much will come out of the BID which Chamber of Trade is working towards at the present time.

County Council is also aiming to give support from its environmental budget and is looking at such projects as improved signage at York Place. He accepted that the situation may not be ideal but that much depends upon people shopping locally and the community supporting local businesses. He reiterated that Town Council is very much trying to support the local community.

1. A resident had also submitted a pre prepared proposal asking town council to support the erection of a bus shelter at the Bond End bus stop and for this to be included in any response to any Planning Application for the building of a dwelling on the site of the former toilets and shelter at Bond End.

The Mayor confirmed that this item would be included on a Town Council agenda for future discussion.

1. A question had been submitted by resident concerning the state of debris at the local cemetery following the recent storms which had brought down many tree branches.

The Mayor confirmed that she had spoken to Environmental Services at HBC who had offered to meet the resident at the cemetery to discuss her concerns and try to agree a plan of action.

1. Another resident mentioned his concerns about the flag flying at the castle, which he felt is not being held down sufficiently well.

He also spoke about the restoration of the property on Kirkgate (old butcher’s shop) and stated that it would have been good if part of the old wall which was uncovered could have been preserved.

Councillor A Willoughby responded to this and stated he had been reliably informed the wall will be covered up from the outside but will be open and visible from inside the shop.

Meeting closed at 8.05 pm