

BRIGG TOWN COUNCIL
FULL COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 24th October 2005
Chairman – Councillor Mrs P.J. Smith (Town Mayor)

Present: Councillors, Mrs. J.A. Bell, M.N. Birkitt, Mrs. J. Brock, C.J. Cook, Mrs. S. Dewberry, M. Doherty, Mrs. A. Eardley, Mrs. M. Glossop, T.D. Glossop, J.E.G. Kidd, J. Kitwood, K. Smith, A. Sykes (absent between 7-8pm), Mrs. A. Tasker, and J. Truepenny.

In attendance:	Mr. K. Simpson	Town Mayor's Chaplain
	Nigel Fisher	Scunthorpe Telegraph
	Cllr LR Long	North Lincolnshire Council
	Cllr J. Berry	North Lincolnshire Council
	Cllr. N. Sherwood	North Lincolnshire Council
	Cllr. J. Briggs	North Lincolnshire Council
	Lead Cabinet Member for Housing	

065 PRAYER

Members were led in prayer by Mr. K. Simpson, the Town Mayor's Chaplain

Condolences were expressed for the families of North Lincolnshire Councillors Philip Wood and Mick Todd, who have both sadly died during the past week.

066 NOTICE CONVENING THE MEETING

Taken as read and approved.

067 APOLOGIES RECEIVED AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

Councillor M.S. Champion is on holiday.
Councillor A.L. Markham is at work
Councillor T. Morris is at work
Councillor A. Sykes had to leave for the first hour of the meeting, to attend to his business.

068 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

069 MINUTES AS CIRCULATED

Councillor K. Smith asked if the list of Annual Award Winners could be recorded in the Minutes, for future reference.

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The clerk advised members that she had ceased to include the full list in the Minutes several years ago. However, this year's awards ceremony was held separately from the Council Meeting, therefore the information could not be recorded within the Minutes.

Councillor K. Smith expressed concern that the list would be lost to public record.

The clerk assured members that a full list of winners was always retained, in the appropriate file, for future reference.

Councillor K. Smith proposed that this information should be noted, on record, for future public reference.

Seconded: Councillor Mrs. P.J. Smith . All agreed.

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Monday 26th September 2005, having been circulated, were then taken as read and approved as a true record.

Proposed: Councillor Mrs. J.A. Bell Seconded: Councillor J. Truepenny.
All agreed.

6. POLICE MATTERS

Reply received from Inspector Ruddy, following the representations made at the last meeting, advising that the issue of speeding traffic along Bigby High Road has been referred to P.C. Roy Hindmarsh; and that the closure of the front desk of the Police Station was due to a completely un-related matter to that of the major road traffic accident on the motorway.

Councillor J. Kitwood arrived and apologised for his late arrival.

Further correspondence received from Mr. R. Neall, resident of St. Helen's Road, Brigg, complaining about cars parking across the footpath, speeding traffic up and down St. Helen's Road; and requesting an update on the position since his last letter earlier in the year.

Members were reminded that a speed check had been undertaken following Mr. Neall's last letter, and the speed check did not uphold the allegation that drivers were persistently speeding along St. Helen's Road. A copy of the survey was provided to Mr. Neall, at that time.

It was agreed that Mr. Neall should be provided with a further copy of the traffic survey, and that his letter should then be forwarded to the local police, for their further attention

070 CORRESPONDENCE

a) NOTICE OF RE-CONVENED A.G.M. – E.R.N.L.L.C.A

Members should have noted from the Policy Committee Minutes that the A.G.M. previously scheduled for September was not quorate. It has now been re-scheduled for Thursday 10th November 2005.

E.R.N.L.L.C.A. will now undertake a survey of member councils to establish a preferred meeting date for the future.

b) Department of Health – On Line Survey – Your Health Care Your Say.

Members and the public are alerted to this on-line survey which is currently underway.

c) Falcon North Lincs Adventure Challenge

Verbal notification received that this Committee is now giving serious consideration to the organisation of a further event, a quadrathlon, which would of course include a swim section in the River Ancholme.

Members are advised that if the event goes ahead next year, it will be used as a trial run, but if it proves to be a success they would be looking toward turning it into a European event the following year.

Councillor Truepenny commented that any event that is well organised and brings visitors to the Town must be positively supported by this Town Council.

Seconded: Councillor Mrs. P.J. Smith. All agreed.

Councillor Mrs. Tasker commented that the only downside is that the event has to be based at the Leisure Centre, which is out of the Town Centre.

d) Credit Union

The local representative of the Credit Union in North Lincolnshire would welcome the opportunity to attend a future Town Council meeting, in order to update members on the benefits of the Credit Union.

It was agreed that an invitation should be extended to attend the November Town Council meeting.

071 UPDATE ON OUTSTANDING ISSUES FROM THE CLERK.

Lighting at the Davy Memorial Field (Minute 057)

This matter now forms part of the ongoing issue of Policing and anti-social behaviour, currently being pursued by the Policy Committee

Overgrown Land to the rear of Brigg Police Station (Minute 057)

Still waiting for action by the Humberside Police Property Services Section.

The future of the Ambulance Service operating out of Brigg (Minute 058)

Members are referred to the Policy Committee Minutes. A reply is currently awaited from the letter of invitation to attend a future Meeting of the Town Council.

Councillor J. Berry (North Lincolnshire Council) provided the Town Mayor with a copy of a reply to his E-Mail, in which it is stated that there are no plans to **reduce the cover** operating out of Brigg. This same E-Mail intimates that the writer will be attending a future Public Meeting in Brigg.

Members noted that, although Councillor Berry specifically requested confirmation that **ambulance cover would not be reduced**, the reply only refers to **cover**.

Donation of the gas lamp and stone tablet (Minute 062)

The clerk has asked a local company to provide a price for renovation and re-location of the gas lamp.

It was agreed that this matter should now be referred to and delegated to the Property & Services Committee.

072 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS.

Councillor Truepenney enquired whether the Town Council contribution toward opening Public Conveniences on Sundays and Bank Holidays, also included the East Park W.C.

The answer is No.

Councillor Mrs A. Eardley enquired whether any progress had been made with regard to establishing ownership of the properties on Springs Parade?

The clerk advised that she is still working on this matter.

073 RECEIVE AND CONSIDER MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES:

Property and Services Committee

Wednesday 5th October 2005

Proposed: Councillor J. Kitwood
No matters arising.

Seconded: Councillor Mrs P.J. Smith
All agreed.

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Irvine Martin In. Ltd	replacement parts for the Christmas Lights £211.26 + V.A.T. £36.97	248.23
Petty Cash	replenish float	55.12
Cllr Mrs. P.J. Smith	Town Mayor's Allowance	200.00
Councillor T.D. Glossop	mileage 96.44 + £5.00 Toll Fee	101.44
Brigg Office Supplies	stationery £14.88 + V.A.T. £2.60	17.48
British Telecom	Office Bill £64.55 + V.A.T. £11.29	75.84

N.B. Please note that the following payments, previously approved by Council, have not been drawn

Nominet (already paid by the Internet Host)	renewal of the domain name	93.00
Actuary Fee (payment not yet required)	cheque cancelled	350.00

Proposed: Councillor Mrs. J.A. Bell Seconded: Councillor J. Truepenney.
All agreed.

- 075 TO CONSIDER THE ALLOCATION OF RESERVE FUNDS TO THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS BUDGET, TO COVER THE COST OF BUSINESS RATES FOR THE UNIT WHICH IS NOW USED TO STORE THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN THE SUM OF £490.75.

Members noted the vast reduction from the first bill that was issued.

Councillor M.N. Birkitt proposed that the bill should be paid from reserve funds.

Seconded: Councillor Mrs. A. Eardley. All agreed.

- 076 TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE CONCLUDING REPORT FROM THE BRIGG M.T.I. / BEACON TOWN FORUM.

Members had been provided with a copy of the document in advance of the meeting.

Councillor Mrs. J.A. Bell expressed a Personal Interest as a member of the Brigg & District Sport and Leisure Association.

Councillor Mrs. J.A. Bell also placed on record her dissatisfaction at the large sums of money which have been paid out in Consultants Fees, which she believes is a complete waste of Public Money.

Councillor M.N. Birkitt agreed with the sentiment behind Councillor Mrs. Bell's comment, but reminded members that funding can not be secured without the backing of a Feasibility Study and a Business Plan, all of which require the services of a Consultant to produce.

Councillor M. Doherty requested clarification with regard to Paragraph 9, which records that one of the projects failed just as a lease was about to be signed., and asked whether the project failed due to the onerous conditions placed upon it by Yorkshire Forward?

As the Town Council representative, Councillor M.N. Birkitt will request clarification on this matter at the next Beacon Town Forum Meeting.

Members agreed that acceptance of the report should be deferred until the answer to hat questions has been received.

Councillor Mrs. A. Eardley proposed that a letter of thanks should be issued to Louise Glover, for all her hard work as the project co-ordinator.

Seconded: Councillor M.N. Birkitt. Agreed.

077 TO CONSIDER THE REQUEST FOR COMMENT ON THE PROPOSED NEW POLICING STRUCTURE, INCLUDING THE POSSIBLE MERGER OF THE HUMBERSIDE POLICE AUTHORITY WITH A NEIGHBOURING POLICE AUTHORITY.

Members were provided with a copy of the letter received, in advance of the meeting.

Members are advised that, although the deadline for responses was Friday 21st October, the clerk has secured permission for the Town Council response to be issued via E.Mail, tomorrow morning, in order for it to be included in the responses received at a Police Authority Meeting later that same day.

Councillor M.N. Birkitt commented that he expected that the favoured merger would be with South or West Yorkshire, and expressed reservations that rural North Lincolnshire would be competing for police attention with larger towns, and inner cities.

Councillor K. Smith suggested that it would surely be preferable for the merger to be with North Yorkshire, which is also a rural area, and therefore faces similar problems.

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Councillor Mrs. A. Tasker advised that the Humberside Chinese Association has expressed a preference to retain the status quo.

Members noted that a merger with Lincolnshire would seem to be out of the question, unless a compelling argument could be put forward to the contrary.

Councillor Mrs. P.J. Smith suggested that the Town Council should put forward that compelling argument, not least of which is the River Humber which divides North Lincolnshire from the rest of its policing area.

Councillor T.D. Glossop endorsed the Town Mayor's sentiments, but commented that the division of Humberside Police Authority is not an option. He also recorded his disappointed at the lack of time provided for proper consultation on such a major issue.

After due consideration and discussion, Councillor M. Doherty proposed that the Town Council response should be:

to protest at the lack of time allowed for consultation, but convey that its favoured option must be a merger with Lincolnshire, which has a similar rural identity, and is not divided from this northern part of Lincolnshire by the River Humber.

To vehemently oppose a merger with South or West Yorkshire for the reasons already stated.

To conclude that, although preferable to South or West Yorkshire, rural North Yorkshire is much too far away from North Lincolnshire on the south bank of the Humber, for policing of such a large and expansive area to be effective.

Seconded: Councillor T.D. Glossop All agreed.

078 COUNCIL HOMES – THE FUTURE

The Town Mayor welcomed Councillor John Briggs, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing at North Lincolnshire Council, who was invited to attend the meeting to provide guidance on the proposals for the future of Council Housing, and to answer questions from members.

Councillor J. Truepenny proposed that standing orders should be suspended for this final item, in order to allow Councillor Briggs to address the meeting, and respond to questions:

Seconded: Councillor Mrs. J.A. Bell. All agreed.

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Councillor Briggs outlined the options available, as follows:

Consultation on the future of Council Homes has been ongoing for the past two years, and he reminded members that North Lincolnshire Council has previously failed two housing inspections, leaving it faced with the possibility of the government installing an independent outside body to manage that section of the Council's duties.

The Council was criticised heavily on the standard of housing maintenance, and for the lack of a Forward Plan for the management of the service. The Housing Stock was appraised, and 46% failed the government's decent homes standard, leaving the Council faced with a bill of £500 million that would need to be invested, over 30 years, in order to bring the council house stock up to the required standard. Needless to say, tenants and staff were highly disillusioned.

The Council therefore had to look for ways in which the required decent home standard could be achieved by 2010.

Councillor Briggs also explained that the government standard is about being wind and watertight, whereas tenants demand a much higher standard than this.

A further inspection of the housing service showed significant improvement, but funding was, and still is, limited.

A Stock Transfer group was then set up and the Council decided in support of a Registered Social Landlord (subject to the support of the tenants), as it would be able to access the funding required for maintenance and repairs.

But with the caveat that, if funding became available through Central Government, that the Council could access to bring the homes up to standard, then the council would wish to access that funding

A Shadow Board is now in place, in order to ensure that a smooth transition can take place if the tenants (who have the final say) vote in favour of the same.

Consultation continues with all tenants, to explain and show them what the options are by means of literature and road shows. Also, before the vote is taken, every tenant will be visited at their home, in order to ensure that they understand what is proposed.

North Lincolnshire Council is not allowed to promote its favoured option, and to this end the procedure is being closely monitored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The ballot will be overseen by the Electoral Commission.

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If the tenants vote against the proposal for a Stand Alone Social Landlord, the process stops immediately, and the Council must face the task of trying to find other means of achieving the Decent Homes Standard Target by 2010.

But the government has stated, categorically, that there will be no funds available for local councils, through central government.

Councillor Brigg confirmed that if the funding had been available to North Lincolnshire Council, it would never have proceeded down this route.

Councillor T.D. Glossop asked how North Lincolnshire Council could be sure that, (if a 'No Vote' is returned by the tenants), it would not be faced with an intervention strategy again in the near future?

Councillor Briggs confirmed that he could not give such a guarantee and, although great improvements have been made over the last two years, without significant funding, he could not foresee how that progress could continue.

Councillor Mrs. A. Tasker commented that, surely the transfer of the housing stock to private ownership is just giving away assets?

Councillor Briggs responded that the current value of the housing stock is actually negative, because the value of the repairs required outstrips the value of the properties themselves. However, there is no actual monetary value to transfer, because a Council Home cannot be sold on for profit, it can only be re-let to another tenant. In addition, the properties will not be owned by a private landlord, a Registered Social Landlord is a Registered Charity not for profit.

Councillor Mrs. A. Eardley asked whether a guarantee could be given that houses will still go to people with real need; and how will the Council guard against the new landlord charging 'sky high rents'?

Councillor Brigg confirmed that the existing assessment criteria for allocation of a council home would not change; and there is also a formula set out by central government, which determines how much rent can be charged, again this will not change.

Councillor Mrs. P.J. Smith asked who would be visiting the tenants in their homes and when?

Councillor Briggs advised that the North Lincolnshire Council Housing Staff would be undertaking this work, in the evenings and at week-ends.

Councillor Mrs. Smith commented that this will surely incur extra costs in wages etc, and that some tenants will be reluctant to open their doors when it is dark.

Councillor Briggs acknowledged these comments.

Councillor Mrs. P.J. Smith then asked how membership of the panel was determined.

Councillor Briggs advised that North Lincolnshire Council had chosen its own 5 members. The tenants advertised for 5 volunteers through their tenant's panel newsletter. The 5 independent representatives were then selected by those ten.

Councillor Mrs. A. Eardley asked if the Right to Buy Scheme would cease if the service is transferred to a Registered Social Landlord?

Councillor J. Briggs confirmed that the scheme would continue.

Councillor Mrs. J.A. Bell asked where the funds for maintenance would come from, if the stock transfer goes ahead?

Councillor Briggs advised that maintenance would be met from rental income.

Councillor Mrs. P.J. Smith asked how repairs would be prioritised.

Councillor Briggs advised that a pre-determined assessment criteria would have to be set out by the board.

Councillor K. Smith asked whether the opportunity would arise for more new council homes to be built in the future.

Councillor Briggs advised that the long term view is to look at regeneration of existing council estates, including some re-design to get rid of the alleys and the ten foots where problems often arise. North Lincolnshire Council is also working on an initiative called 'youth build' where apprentices build homes which they can then live in. Hopefully, building more council homes will also form part of the 30 year strategy.

Councillor J. Kitwood asked how the money borrowed to undertake the repairs would be repaid.

Councillor Briggs confirmed that it would have to be repaid out of the rental income.

Councillor Kitwood then advised that he had visited one of the road shows, and he felt that the message being given to the tenants was almost 'bribery', in that they were being shown what would be available if they voted in favour of the transfer e.g new bathrooms, kitchens, windows etc.

Councillor Briggs advised that there is definitely no bribery involved. There are only two options available, and the choice will be determined by the tenants, by secret ballot.

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Councillor Kitwood also asked why the government was not willing to make the same funding available to District Councils?

Councillor Briggs responded that only the government could answer that question, but if the government was willing to make the funds available, then North Lincolnshire Council would be highly delighted.

The clerk advised Councillor Briggs that she had also received reports that the road shows were leading tenants to believe that all their repairs and improvements would be guaranteed if they voted in favour of the transfer, and perhaps the staff needed to make it more clear that, although there might be more money available than before, both repairs and improvements would still be subject to a stringent assessment procedure, and then dealt with in strict priority.

Councillor Briggs acknowledged this observation.

There were no further questions, the Town Mayor thanked Councillor Briggs for his attendance, and declared the meeting closed at 9.15pm

Chairman, meeting held Monday 28th November 2005