



# Redenhall with Harleston Town Council

Clerk: Mrs. L. Ling

## Minutes of a meeting of Redenhall with Harleston Town Council Held at Harleston Leisure Centre On Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2017

**Present:** Councillors – Barry Woods, Frances Bickley, Mark Betts, Ian Broughton, Martin Roberts and John Marjoram.

**Also Present:** District Councillor Jeremy Savage, District Councillor Brian Riches, County Councillor Martin Wilby, Councillor John Fuller, Jonathan Pyle, Lee Hornby, Lynda Ling (Clerk), Tina Page (Office Administrator) and 41 members of the public.

1. **Welcome** – Councillor Woods welcomed those present at the meeting.
2. **To receive and accept apologies from members unable to attend** – Councillors Joselyn and Rose.
3. **Declarations of pecuniary and other interests** – Councillor Marjoram declared a personal interest
4. **To receive a report from Frances Bickley, Vice-Chairman of the Council** – Councillor Bickley gave those present a detailed background picture of the history leading up to the present situation with the car parks, including costs (see Appendix 1). Also included in the report is the following information:-

### Current proposals from South Norfolk Council (SNC)

**Option 1** - SNC to take back the car parks; fully manage the car parks and implement their charging structure with the first hour of parking free. Bullock Fair Close car park to become a short stay car park, Broad Street car park to become long stay car park. Discounted car parking permits available to residents / businesses within a qualifying area. Car parking free from 5pm – 8am Monday – Saturday. Free parking on Sundays and Bank Holidays. **Costs to Harleston Town Council (HTC) – any delapidations that SNC feel need rectifying (most likely professional fees involved to resolve)**

**Option 2** - As above, but with the option to purchase a second free hour giving 2 hours of free parking to all in Bullock Fair Close car park. Parking would be free from 4pm – 8am Monday – Saturday. Free parking on Sundays and Bank Holidays. **Costs to HTC - £15,700 per annum**

NB: SNC have also offered to provide up to £60,000 for HTC to plan and refurbish the old toilet block. SNC would remove the new 'unwanted' block and HTC would take on a 35 year lease for a peppercorn rent of £1.00 per annum. HTC would be responsible for the running of the toilets and HTC decided that these facilities would be offered free at point of use to residents and visitors.

**Costs to HTC approximately £9000 per annum**

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Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday & Friday 9.30am to 1pm and Wednesdays 1pm to 5pm

Take on a new long term lease (10 years minimum).

**Costs per annum to HTC £50,000 plus additional costs as follows:-**

**Approximate Cost of South Norfolk Council lease Proposal per annum**

Lease	37000
(with periodic escalation)	
Sink fund (resurfacing/relining)	13000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£50,000</b>

**Plus additional costs to Town Council:**

Business Rates	7502 (subject to increases)
Landscape maintenance	1196
Administration	500
Lighting / Electricity	225
Litter Picking	2600
Interceptor cleaning	1250
Insurance - Included in HTC PL Insurance	0
Column / lantern replacements	1500
Posts / Boundary fencing	1500
One off Legal Costs to HTC (in respect of drawing up lease)	1250

**Total approximate annual Costs to HTC £67,523**

A very positive meeting was held with 3 senior managers at the East of England Co-operative Society on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2017 at their head office in Wherstead, Ipswich.

As the Co-op are about to acquire the Budgen's store site on Bullock Fair Close on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2017, the town council felt it appropriate to hold talks with them to let them know the options in respect of the Bullock Fair Close car park, of which their new store and car park sits within.

All proposals on the table were laid out and they are now in talks with their Chief Executive. They are aware of the dates we are working within and we await their response.

South Norfolk Council has offered up to £60,000 to refurbish the old toilet block and take away the new existing toilet block. The proposal is that the Town Council will take on a 35 year lease, for a peppercorn rent. The Council will manage these, will be free at point of use and the cost to the Council will be around £9,000 per year.

The Chairman introduced Councillor John Fuller, Leader of South Norfolk Council.

**Councillor John Fuller:** Has been the leader of South Norfolk District Council for 10 years and made a decision to resurface car parks across the district when he first became leader, after hearing that an elderly lady had fallen in a car park, and also thought that parking should be free for the first hour. Further information given included:-

- A quicker turnaround of spaces was necessary to support the shops, those people that park all day should pay parking fees, however, there are generous discounts for a season ticket. If there are less than 15% of the spaces in the car park, people will not be guaranteed a space, and if this is the case, people will not return.
- A survey was commissioned by SNC with GVA Grimbsy – National firms published a map to show where people shop from Harleston. It was a very focused survey with 1000 people taking part in a telephone interview.
- During trading hours SNC would be charging for parking.

- People that are parked during the day will be able to buy a season ticket that is less than £1 per day.
- Outside trading hours anyone can park free of charge.
- Action for Market Towns stated that 84% of shoppers, shop for less than 2 hours.
- To continue for free, costs must be met. JF can understand why free car parking is a draw, but not the way that market towns have prospered over the years. It is better that the users pay the car park and not the residents.
- The original offer was a 3 way package to involve the gym and the toilets.
- The car park dilapidations would be over £100,000. SNC will forget the dilapidations if an arrangement can be agreed.
- The SNC don't make a profit, they just want to break even.

## 5. To discuss the SNC car parks, options available and agree any action –

### The standing orders were suspended at 7.25pm and reconvened at 8.30pm for public participation

Councillor Woods asked if attendees would like declare who wishes to speak and also say if they are a resident, business owner or organisation.

A number of business owners contributed to the meeting with a variety of views and comments including:-

- why the complete package was not investigated? **Councillor Woods** replied, that it was not in the best interest of Harleston to discuss the package as a whole, but as individual items. The remit of the steering group was only to discuss the car park issue as agreed at the public meeting.
- A Community Right to Bid could be launched and many management firms run car parks or the community could run it. **Councillor Fuller** replied that if you were implying to purchase the car parks the cost would be £500,000 – 1,000,000 and if you had NCP (or similar) running car parks it would be profitable.
- Why do we pay business rates on car parks where we do not generate any income? Do you charge for staff to park in your car park? **Councillor Fuller** replied, that the SNC staff car park is not for the public, it is not for shoppers, staff are not charged to park
- Permit parking of £300 per year, this is very high compared with elsewhere, for instance Bungay £22. **Councillor Fuller** replied there is a distinction between on-street parking and off-street parking. If the discussion with HTC was positive, then we could consider talking about off-street parking.
- We all want to have free parking, you have mentioned cross subsidising Harleston. The £37,000 is not a reflection of actual costs it is an accounting cost. Parking machines bump up the cost, and we are paying £9,000 for a car park manager and enforcement officer, which is taken across the whole district but does not apply to Harleston. **Councillor Fuller** replied, this is true and he has reduced the costs to £37,000.
- **Councillor Woods** stated that the problem is that the Town Council is already paying 80-85% of the costs of the car park and that the original agreement was a 50/50 split of the lease and business rates. The residents have been putting a lot of money into this and the minimum level has not been funded. The Town Council cannot continue to pay. The business make a voluntary contribution, some do not and the people of Harleston will need to decide. **Member of public** - this is based on 10 years ago and you should not put businesses down.
- **Business owner** - The annual cost £29,700 – all accept the sinking fund, the cost of resurfacing the car park does not cost £240,000. Why are we paying a lease when there is no cost to SNC. The peppercorn rent is an acknowledgement between councils. Costs £16,500. Sinking fund £13,000, plus peppercorn rent £1. **Councillor Fuller** - That deal is

not on the table for discussion. SNC have 16 car parks -1000 spaces, and we need to take into consideration the number plate recognition etc. The increase in costs has to be divided by the number of spaces. Irreducible costs have to be met. £16,000 + £13,000 + overheads = approx. £50,000.

- **Member of the public** - Appreciate the complexities and is also mindful about a conclusion on the way to proceed and after a year the discussion is still going on. The councillors around the table will need to make a conclusion. At the December, meeting the people agreed to try and get the car parks free at point of use. Therefore we need to go to the people and is uncomfortable with a decision about the second hour being made tonight.
- **Member of the public** - Does not like the way the Town Council has presented the figures, it needs to be simple. You need to go back to the public as we want free car parking. **Councillor Bickley** replied that residents already pay a proportion and if the lease was renewed it would add an extra £28.50 per annum, per household. This is the current cost per household, including contributions. **Councillor Woods** - the situation is that the Town Council takes 80-85% of the cost towards the car parks from the precept payers of the town.
- **Resident and involved in lots of groups.** I would like to remind people that 40% of the car park is not owned by SNC. Do we know what is happening to the Co-op part? Can't see how a decision can be made tonight - could the town council have more time (To Councillor Fuller)

**The meeting was suspended between 8.25pm - 8.30pm for Councillors Woods and Fuller to have a conversation privately to one side of the meeting room**

Councillor Fuller stated that he has listened to everyone's comments and options 1 to 3 have been discussed. The people should have the information and the choice, either the cost is borne by residents on their council tax, or the people who use the car parks will have to pay. Councillor Fuller suggested having a town poll and is prepared to give the council additional time to arrange this.

Councillor Woods commented that there are a lot of residents that have not been consulted and they have the right to decide on this issue, and suggested putting a proposal forward to consult with the townspeople through a parish poll, the Council will put together a set of costings with proposals and deliver to every household in the town to give people a chance to express their opinion. Agreement to this course of action was proposed by Councillor Woods and seconded by Councillor Roberts.

**6 AGREED  
1 ABSTAINED**

Councillor Fuller stated that a decision needs to be made by the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017.

**Meeting ended at 8.45pm**

Signed: .....

Date: .....