

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of

WHITWORTH TOWN COUNCIL held on

THURSDAY 17th August 2023 at 7pm in the council chamber

Present

Chairman

Councillor G Baron

Councillors

Councillor R A Neal

Councillor T Aldred

Councillor S Rhodes

Councillor J Whitehead

Councillor K Olaolu

Councillor L Burton

Clerk of the Council: Miss R Hodson

2 members of public were present; no members of the press were present.

63. To receive apologies and the reasons for absence.

Councillor Royds was caring for a family member, Councillors Whitworth and Blezard had work commitments, Councillor Powell had family commitments and Councillor Chorlton had a prior engagement.

1. To receive any Declarations of Interest.

None.

1. To discuss Jubilee Gardens.

Councillor Olaolu explained that she and Councillor Whitehead had contacted an officer at LCC last year regarding this area. Recent communications have stated that if Whitworth Town Council wish to lodge an objection to its proposed sale, this needed to be done before the next planned meeting of Whitworth Town Council and so this meeting has been called. She considered that the site is rich in biodiversity, and it houses a variety of dragonflies, butterflies, kestrel, including those on the red list. She stated that wildlife had taken over the site and she had approached the Whitworth In Bloom cemetery team who had agreed to strim the footpath. Councillor Olaolu also expressed concern that if the land is sold, it could be developed and if it were lost, it would be lost forever.

Councillor Whitehead confirmed that she had contacted LCC a few times regarding the area and that discussions have been ongoing for some time. She considered that it needs saving and to get the lease back. She thought that the maintenance needed was minimal and believed that Whitworth Men In Sheds may be able to build some bird and bat boxes for the area.

Councillor Burton stated that she agreed with the previous two speakers and that the area should be preserved for wildlife. Councillor Aldred thought it was important to think of the past. He considered that it had been donated in recognition of a previous minister of Saint Anselm’s Church and thought that is would be unreasonable of LCC to sell land that had been donated.

Councillor Neal spoke about the history of the area and thought it was a grey area whether the land was transferred to LCC in 1974. He considered that the wall had been poorly repaired and thought that the wall should remain under LCC’s liability. He considered that any agreement drawn up should be signed by the CEO of LCC.

It was resolved that Council suspend standing orders to allow members of the public to speak. This was moved by Councillor Neal and seconded by Councillor Whithead.

A member of the public identified herself as being a member of Whitworth In Bloom’s cemetery team. She asked for it to made clear that the Whitworth In Bloom Group would not be taking the project on; It was two individuals who are part of the cemetery group who are keen to help maintain it. Another member of the public said that he agreed with the previous speaker and would be happy to strim the footpath as needed. He considered that it would be a shame to lose it to developers and that there are always children playing there.

It was resolved that Council reinstate standing orders. This was moved by Councillor Neal and seconded by Councillor Olaolu.

Councillor Baron felt that Whitworth is overdeveloped as it is and that the time to act is now. Councillor Baron echoed Councillor Neal’s concerns regarding the wall and thought that there needed to be conversation had with LCC regarding this. He also considered that it might be helpful to get a quote for the wall to ascertain possible future costs. Councillor Aldred thought that it might be helpful to contact Whitworth Museum to see if there were any documents stored there that might relate to the land. Councillor Olaolu said that she had already investigated this and could find no physical documents relating to this. She stated that there was a plaque regarding the land donation and councillors agreed to try to source this.

It was resolved that an Expression of Interest be submitted to LCC regarding Jubilee Gardens asking what process Whitworth Town Council needs to follow, and a negotiation is started regarding the wall. This was moved by Councillor Whitehead and seconded by Councillor Rhodes.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.30pm.