



MONTHLY COUNCIL MEETING HELD BY ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE

In accordance with (The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020)

Present: Councillors;

Tony Allen, Ben Chadwick, Annette Dunning, Peter Dutton, Rosemary Lewis, Karen Prime, Jill Reece, David Thomas, Maureen Took, Jackie Wagner, David Wollweber (Chair).

In Attendance: Nick Rees (Town Clerk), County and District Cllr Tony Goldson, 73 members of the public.

Minutes

The Chair, Cllr David Wollweber, welcomed everyone to the meeting, he noted that there had been a great deal of interest in the meeting on social media relating to item 4 on the agenda and members of the public would be invited to have their say during the public session under item 3. Cllr David Thomas as Chair of HCSL (Halesworth Community Sport & Leisure) would then be given an opportunity to respond.

There followed a minute's silence for the recent passing of HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

1. Apologies: Cllr Anne Fleming (internet issues)
2. Declarations of interest: To receive declarations for non-pecuniary interests: Cllr Dutton (former council appointed trustee of HCSL), Cllr Lewis (Member of the Bowls Club), Cllr Thomas (Chair of HCSL), Cllr Dunning (previously trustee of the former HPFA and previously Campus Director), Cllr Allen for item 11
3. Public Session: The Chair explained that in view of the number of residents attending the meeting, the public session would be extended as necessary in order to allow time for members of the public to speak. [The following extracts from the meeting are the Clerk's interpretation for minute purposes to provide context, it not intended as a verbatim account] The Council heard from Will Kerlake, Chair of Halesworth Football Club (HTFC) who gave a brief history of the club and reported that the fees had recently been increased by 68% and that they had still been unable to obtain a lease from HCSL. Mr Kerlake wished to ask the following questions; 1. Why won't HCSL agree to negotiate a sustainable lease for both HTFC & HCSL? 2. Does HCSL consider it good practice to impose a 68% price increase without any consultation, particularly in this Covid 19 period where incomes have been severely restricted? 3. HTFC requests sight of the fire risk report conducted in October 2020 which has been used as the reason for causing the recent problems and further if the report had been so serious, why was action not taken in the Autumn and the clubs advised accordingly? 4. HTFC has paid up all fees so why was it acceptable to change the locks without prior warning? 5. When was David Thomas informed by the insurers that the pavilion could be opened?
Claire Chenery, Chair of Halesworth Town Juniors, read out a statement; which included; concerns that they were unable to play on the 4th April due to the substandard fencing, and debris left on site and the condemned pavilion. No response received from HCSL on the Health and Safety report (sent to the FA, HTC and HCSL) which highlighted the dangerous

condition of the fencing, nails sticking out, sharp edges, etc. The HCSL had received grants from the FA for fencing but the workmanship was substandard. David Thomas has for the past three years informed the Juniors that the Basley Ground had been condemned by the FA and could not be used but on checking with the FA they had no record of this on file. A new under 7s pitch, which the HCSL had funding for, and was deemed to be urgent, months later is still not ready for use. Similar comments regarding the Pavilion fire safety, locks being changed, lack of notification, as reported by Will Kerslake. Also concerns over the welfare of the children during these disruptions. Claire Chenery called for David Thomas to resign as Chair of HCSL.

Simon Thackray, in a highly emotional address to the Council outlined his views and experiences dealing with the Chair of HCSL, David Thomas. Mr Thackray wished to make it clear to the Council that the issues regarding access and the pavilion was just a small part of the problems that the clubs have had to deal with, it goes far beyond this and involved, he said, a culture of secrecy, broken promises, a complete breakdown in confidence from the clubs, intimidation, bullying misquotes and misunderstandings. Spending £1,000s of public money based decisions made by emails suggesting to the recipients that they had 36 hours and after which no response would be taken as agreement. Mr Thackray appealed to the Council to reinstate the five council appointed trustees to HCSL and asked that in the interests of the community and the clubs that David Thomas steps down as Chair and that the other trustees consider their positions. Mr Thackray also asked the Council, after hearing about these concerns from the public, that they consider writing to the Charities Commission.

Mr Mick Binder, Chair of the Tennis Club and former HCSL trustee endorsed Mr Thackray's account. Mr Binder explained that the Tennis Club had so far put forward three trustees to HCSL and every one had since resigned due to their inability to work with the Chair, David Thomas. Mr Binder said that he had many issues with Mr Thomas' rudeness and bullying tactics but there wasn't time to recount all this at the meeting. Mr Binder did wish to draw attention to a financial matter; HCSL received a grant from East Suffolk Council for £10k (Covid Small Business Grant Fund) which, he said, Mr Thomas had claimed credit for securing and this grant was to be used for capital expenditure and not for running costs and consequently it would not be shared with the clubs. On checking with ESC, Mr Binder was informed that this was in fact the opposite to what Mr Thomas had claimed and that the grant was in fact entirely for running costs due to the lack of income during the Covid pandemic.

Claire Chenery also wished the Council to be aware that an online petition to get the clubs playing again at Dairy Hill and asking for David Thomas to resign as Chair of HCSL had attracted over 1000 signatories.

Joanna Barfield wished to ask about the Community Infrastructure Levy and a report suggested that East Suffolk Council were only supporting what was deemed essential at the Campus ground, namely the pitches and that she was concerned that other facilities would not be provided. The same resident also asked for more consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, she would like to learn more about their involvement with developers and potential sites such as the one on Saxon Way.

The Chair thanked all those who had spoken in the public session and the many residents that had attended the meeting, he explained that now the meeting would enter a closed session so councillors could debate the issues raised on item 4 and to continue with the rest of the agenda.

4. HCSL/Dairy Hill: To consider whether the Town Council can assist in resolving the current issues reported by members of the public and members of the clubs that use the ground.

Cllr Thomas asked for the questions and statements from the public to be sent to him. He also considered that this was mostly a personal attack on him. Cllr Thomas stated that he had attempted to resign three times in the past week but would talk to the trustees again. Cllr Thomas admitted that he had been mistaken about the purpose of the grant monies from East Suffolk Council, mentioned by Mr Binder, but had since checked with ESC and reported that the grants were only awarded to the rate payer, and so it should be used for the purpose of re-opening the grounds. Cllr Thomas then read out a statement from the trustees, not from himself, he explained. [Summarised for the minutes] The Dairy Hill grounds have

been open since the 29th March and continue to remain open for use under Covid rules. Cllr Thomas' statement went on to explain that, following the fire safety inspection failures, the insurers had advised that the pavilion be closed and the clubs were notified immediately. A new fire door was installed for safety and security reasons. Cllr Thomas went on to explain the future plans of HCSL; to increase the mini pitches, provide leases for the clubs and the sale of HCSL's surplus land which would then be reinvested into Dairy Hill. Trustees, he said, apologised for all misunderstandings.

Cllr Dutton urged the Council to try to move forward rather than discussing previous history. Cllr Dutton had initially intended to suggest mediation but clearly there was now a total breakdown of trust. At previous meetings Cllr Thomas had said that HCSL would welcome councillors to put themselves forward as trustees but on both occasions there had been no volunteers and Cllr Dutton had asked whether Cllr Thomas knew why.

In response Cllr Thomas begged the Council to find five trustees that were willing to help and said that he was more than willing to step down as Chair but it was a decision for the trustees to make. The issues he said were really with the two clubs that had spoken tonight and wished to explain that none of the clubs had been charged anything since January 2020 and that if he had distributed the funding from ESC to the clubs then the grounds would not have been able to reopen.

Cllr Wagner felt the Council should listen to the public who had attended the meeting and did not accept that Cllr Thomas had to refer to trustees to resign; he could do that right here and now if he wished to do so. Cllr Wagner also asked who exactly the trustees of HCSL were as this was certainly not clear.

Cllr Thomas declined to comment

Cllr Allen reminded councillors that David Thomas was representing HCSL in this particular section of the meeting and so should be referred to as David Thomas rather than Councillor Thomas. However the main point was that in Cllr Allen's opinion, David Thomas had lost the confidence of the town and was bringing the town in disrepute again and this was something that he had managed to do many times over the years. His position was untenable and he should resign as Chair of HCSL.

In response David Thomas acknowledged that he had past histories with Cllr Allen and so his comments should be taken with a pinch of salt. Cllr David Thomas then announced that he was resigning as a Halesworth Town Councillor with immediate effect and then left the meeting at 7.43pm.

The Chair acknowledged that some parts of the agenda would not be covered due to the time left but this was a very important matter and the Council needed to step up and support all opportunities for sport and leisure in the town particularly for the younger generations. The Chair also concluded that David Thomas' position as Chair of HCSL was now untenable.

Cllr Jill Reece reported that she had acted as a note taker for the HCSL previously but found that these notes were then amended by the Chair and this was not something she was at all comfortable with. Cllr Reece asked the Council to ensure that all meetings involving any council appointed trustees should be minuted properly.

After some further discussion it was RESOLVED that the Council would reverse the decision made in May 2018 and from this point on revert back to five Council appointed trustees (previously two) on Halesworth Community Sport and Leisure CIO (Charitable Incorporated Charity). The trustees appointed were as follows; Cllr Annette Dunning, Cllr Peter Dutton, Cllr Karen Prime, Cllr Rosemary Lewis and Cllr Jackie Wagner. It was noted that the Council could also appoint residents with an interest in the Dairy Hill facilities as trustees in place of some of the councillors and the Council agreed this would be beneficial and would welcome those interested to contact the Clerk. However, in the meantime the immediate focus should be on trying to resolve the issue at HCSL and the five appointed trustees would work towards that goal as soon as possible.

It was also RESOLVED that the Council would write to ask David Thomas to consider his position as Chair of HCSL.

5. Minutes: The minutes of the monthly meeting held on the 1st March, 2021, the minutes of the extraordinary meeting on the 15th March and the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on the 29th March were accepted as a true record with amendment under item 2 of the meeting held on the 29th March the following interests should be recorded; Cllr Dutton (former HCSL trustee), Cllr Dunning (former Campus director & former HPFA trustee), Cllr Fleming (Trustee HCSL), Cllr Thomas (Chair of HCSL)
6. Matters arising from the Minutes: Cllr Dunning asked about the ownership of the gym equipment. The Clerk confirmed that the answer was complicated and he would explain further at another meeting. Cllr Dunning asked about the signage in the Thoroughfare, raised by a resident at the last meeting. The Clerk confirmed that he had requested that a permanent sign be erected showing the road closure times and then it could be left in place. SCC had not responded despite many attempts and the Clerk appealed to County Cllr Goldson to see if he could intervene. Cllr Allen was asked whether he had contacted Eric Sewell of the Apollo Club and he confirmed that he had but did not wish to go into any further details.
7. Chair's Report: To receive a report for March. In view of the time left, the Chair would report at the May meeting instead.
8. To receive written reports on meetings and events attended by Council representatives: Cllr Lewis and provided a report on the Museum meeting. Cllr Allen wished to expand on this meeting with Mr Sewell in so far that Mr Sewell was in support of the Council's decision at the last meeting.
9. District & County Reports: To receive any reports. NOT DISCUSSED
10. Financial Matters: To consider the following: The Council received and noted the report of the meeting held on the 15th March, 2021: There were no questions
11. Planning Committee:
 - a) To receive a report and to review the decision made at the extraordinary meeting held on the 29th March, 2021: The Council had received the report of the meeting. Cllr Dutton had circulated a proposed response to Therese Coffey MP after her comments made recently that had been inaccurate and contrary to the Council's decision. It was RESOLVED that the Council agreed that the letter should be sent from the whole Council
 - b) To confirm the date of ESC's planning committee and consider any further action. NOT DISCUSSED
12. ABP Committee: To receive any updates: NOT DISCUSSED
13. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
 - a) The Council had received the minutes of the meeting held on the 17th March, 2021 but due to time constraints this item was: NOT DISCUSSED
 - b) To review the presentation of the introductory sections of the Neighbourhood Plan and the first stage of the Connectivity survey held on Tuesday 23rd March via Zoom: NOT DISCUSSED
14. Environment Committee: The Council had received the minutes of the meeting held on the 31st March, 2021 but due to time constraints this item was: NOT DISCUSSED
15. Communications Committee: To receive any updates: NOT DISCUSSED

On a Resolution, the meeting was extended by ten minutes

16. Annual Meeting of the Council: To confirm that the Annual meeting of the Town Council will be held on Tuesday 4th May at 6.30pm via Zoom: The Clerk reminded councillors of the agreed date
17. Annual Parish meeting: To confirm that the Annual Parish meeting will be on Thursday April 29th at 6.30pm via Zoom: The Clerk reminded councillors of the agreed date
18. Correspondence: NOT DISCUSSED
19. Maintenance: NOT DISCUSSED
20. Items for the Website/Noticeboard/Newsletters/Library. Awards: NOT DISCUSSED
21. Accounts for Payment: The following accounts for payment were approved.

<u>4610.</u>	East Suffolk Council Annual Market Rates (Food Act 1984)	449.10
<u>4611.</u>	East Suffolk Council Annual office rates (LGA 1972 s111)	598.80
<u>4612.</u>	Community Action Suffolk – HTC Insurance (LGA 1972 s111)	1096.75
<u>4613.</u>	Community Action Suffolk – Day Centre Insurance (LGA 1972 s133)	306.84

DD/Standing Orders:

<u>4614.</u>	Monthly salaries (LGA 1972 s112)	2623.39
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Bank & Cash Balances at 31st March, 2021

Current 728	£128,844.89
Unity Trust	£63,949.58
Community A/c	£5,296.33
Business Reserves 017	£92,702.24
Petty Cash	£71.83

The meeting was closed at 8.40pm